

Parent Involvement as an Instructional Strategy:

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

by

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ABSTRACT

Families and schools share the monumental responsibility of educating children. Children and parent-teacher conferences remain the primary means by which parents and teachers share academic information. Given the limited effectiveness of these conferences, a more compelling alternative for home-school collaboration on academic matters is warranted.

The purpose of this action research study was to examine an alternative approach to parent-teacher conferences, Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT). APTT is a classroom-based parent involvement model composed of three 75-minute parent-teacher team meetings and an individual 30-minute parent-teacher session. Team meetings are highly structured and include six components: personally inviting parents by the teacher; sharing whole-class and individual student data; setting 60-day academic goals; coaching parents in ‘teaching’ skills; distributing take-home practice materials; and networking.

Quantitative data included pre- and post-intervention parent surveys, and pre- and post-intervention student scores on high frequency words and oral reading fluency. Qualitative data included field notes from APTT meetings, pre- and post-intervention teacher reflections, and teacher, parent, and student interviews.

Findings from this study supported previous research that suggested most parents have high aspirations for their children’s academic success. Findings also indicated parents understood their involvement was important to support

academic growth. Increased quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication and interaction improved parents' ability to support student learning at home. Parents increased involvement in children's academics was related to teachers' provision of detailed information and training of parents. Qualitative results showed parents' teaching efforts contributed to students' improvement in reading.

To understand this outcome, effectual congruence (EC) was offered as an explanation. EC occurred when parents and teachers agreed on an action plan for student achievement, when there was a mutual commitment to taking specific actions and when each person's role was clearly defined and implemented. EC became the process that supported achievement growth. These results demonstrated that relationships between parents and teachers are complex. Further, when teachers and parents were fully invested in collaboration it produced powerful results for students. This study provided critical information for parents, teachers, administrators and policy makers attempting to implement more effective parent involvement initiatives.

DEDICATION

For my beloved sisters Laura and Aaurima.

This is also dedicated to teachers, parent liaisons, and the Community Education staff who work with passion every day to make our vision a reality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a privilege to work side by side with amazing teachers, students, parents and parent liaisons. Their individual indelible voices reside here. I am profoundly grateful to each participant because without their wisdom, their hard work and their openness, this project would not have been possible. This project allowed me to explore domains and spaces previously untraveled by educational researchers. This work was a perfect fit to my passion for traveling the back roads of teaching and learning, and for becoming personal with the routinely invisible people who send their children to school.

I was blessed to work under the direction of Ray Buss, my dissertation chair. He believed in me and the importance of this work from the beginning, always demanded my best work, even if that meant being available and giving advice at all hours of the day, including nights and weekends. I am also grateful to Ronald Zambo and Eric Margolis, my dissertation committee members, for their honest and reliable advice and assistance. The wisdom and dedication offered by all three professors prepared and supported me through the entire project.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is common wisdom that most children from privilege enter the educational system with a set of academic skills and socio-cultural advantages that prove invaluable in our society. A majority of college-educated parents with professional careers make it their life's work to guarantee their children have an unrestricted pathway to college and beyond. On the other side of the tracks, most children raised in chronic poverty enter the public education system with extensive academic and socio-cultural limitations, overcoming these disadvantages becomes the life work of inner-city educators. These two very different communities of children have one significant variable in common—parents with immense aspirations for their future.

Affluent families have first-hand knowledge of how to turn aspirations for their children's future into attainment, the trajectory is clear. For parents in poverty, the course of action is a hit and miss proposition, mostly miss. Understanding distinctions in social class and cultural capital is imperative as educators move toward creating new initiatives for parent involvement in education. Parents in Title I schools are the most underused and underestimated resource children have for academic success. Parents are the stakeholders in education with the most to lose when their children fail to meet learning standards. Yet, most educators shield parents from valuable data and grade level learning objectives that if known might result in actionable efforts taken by

parents to support children's learning. Shifting the current parent involvement paradigm from a school-centered model to a student-centered model is a noble beginning.

I believe that all children deserve a successful educational experience that includes teachers and parents skillfully collaborating to guide their steps as they develop into assertive learners and critical problem solvers. It is this conviction that has given direction to my professional and educational compass. My educational journey started twenty years ago as a teaching assistant for undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Upon the completion of my Masters Degree I relocated in Phoenix, Arizona where I started teaching middle and high school students who were incarcerated at Black Canyon Federal Correctional Center. An overwhelming majority of those students were Latino and from low-income families. After five-years of this eye-opening experience, I searched for and found a job teaching impoverished, immigrant, Latino parents in a school district in Central Phoenix where I have worked since. During this time I received a second Masters degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and I am currently completing a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership and Innovation. I serve as the Director of the Community Education Department for the school district. My work and passion are focused on meaningfully connecting parents and teachers to maximize student learning. Our Community Education Department serves nine K-8 schools and provides educational opportunities for approximately 2,000 parents and community

members each year. At each school campus a parent liaison leads the parent involvement efforts and my major responsibility is to provide the parent liaisons with departmental goals, action steps, administrative support, and the professional development necessary to achieve our goals.

I have learned over my twenty years of work with minority, working class families that all parents want their children to succeed academically and professionally. The injustice lies in the fact that only some parents have the knowledge and educational attainment that are most often associated with parental advocacy and involvement for quality education and academic success. Creating a sustainable system in schools that supports parent-teacher collaboration and provides parents with knowledge and training on how to be engaged is at the heart of this action research study.

Situational Context

The district has a student population of 6,700, consists of nine-Title I schools, and is located in Phoenix. The demographic composition is 5% African American, 5% Native American, 5% White, and 85% Hispanic. Ninety percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch and 33% are English Language Learners placed in English Language Development classrooms, consistent with state law requirements. Special education is provided to 12% of the students and 4% of the students are classified as gifted and talented. The district has a 40% to 45% mobility rate, a 7% absenteeism rate, and suspends or expels an average of 7% of its students each year. The district shares its attendance area with four shelters that serve abandoned children, females who are victims of domestic

violence, and displaced families facing homelessness. On average, 300 homeless students attend schools in the district.

Of considerable importance for the context of this study is the issue of immigration status among some parents and students. Since 2007, Maricopa County Sheriff, Joe Arpaio, has used his power and resources to arrest and deport undocumented immigrants. His deputies regularly conduct raids in diverse community locations aimed at jailing and deporting undocumented residents. Many of these deportations have resulted in parents being separated from their children, and children having to be raised by neighbors or friends. Families in the school district live under constant fear of being targeted. The majority of Hispanic children in the district are American citizens with undocumented parents; whereas, some families have older children who are undocumented and younger children who are citizens. A large number of these families have been living and working in Arizona for many years. Parental involvement in school for many district families translates into leaving the safety of their own homes and taking the significant risk of being arrested. Despite that fear, parents are willing to take the risk to provide their children a greater chance at academic success. To compound the anti-immigration sentiment, in 2006 Arizona passed a referendum, Proposition 300 that forbids college students from receiving financial assistance unless they can prove legal residency. These tremendous challenges faced by community members in the district are the social backdrop against which this action research study is set.

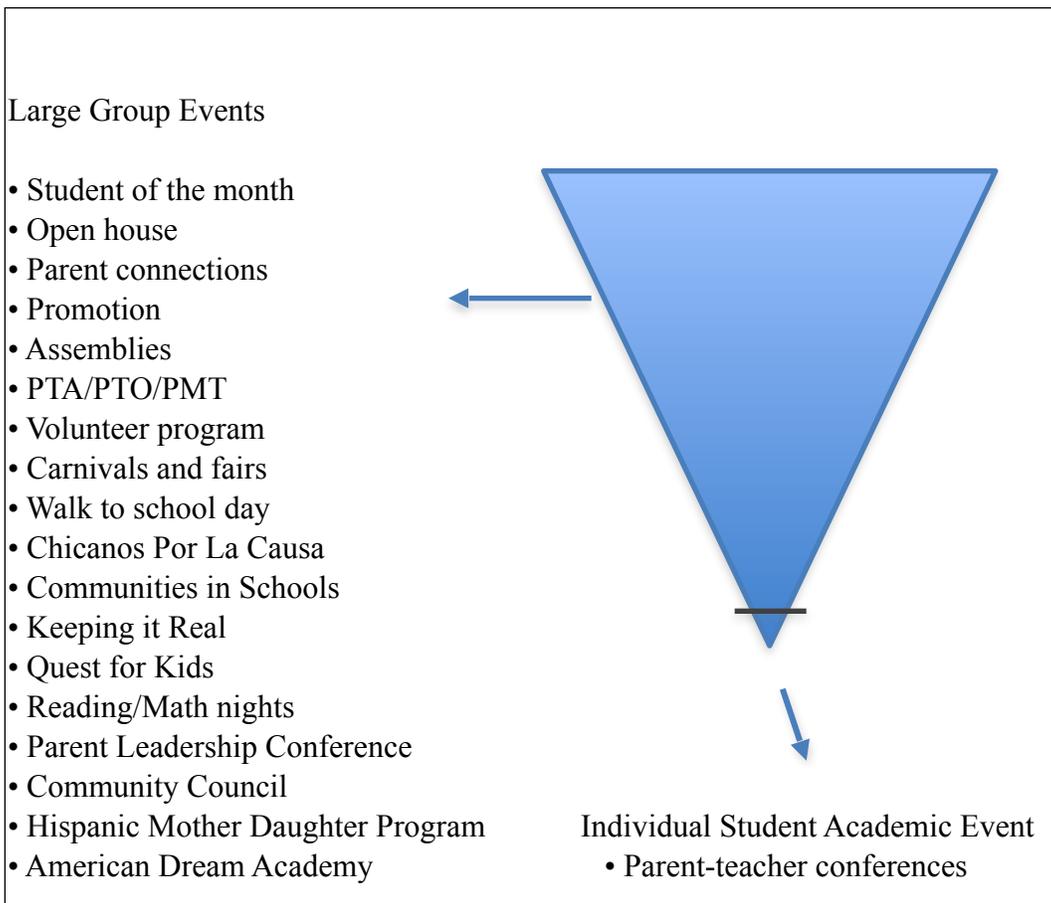
The district has struggled with student achievement as measured by state standardized testing for many years. For this reason, it was labeled a failing district and put on a district improvement plan by the Arizona Department of Education in 2005. The district has made great strides in student performance since 2008, and in 2009 six of the nine schools were labeled performing plus and the remaining three were labeled performing. To assist the district in improving instruction and learning, WestEd with its “Districts Moving Up” initiative in partnership with the Ellis Foundation have worked closely with teachers and administration. This partnership has led to a restructuring of the district’s professional development for teachers and administrators. As a result, the district has implemented a more systemic teacher evaluation system that aims to create consistency in the quality of instruction and student engagement in learning across all nine schools. In addition, school administrators have been trained to be more involved with coaching teachers and modeling best practices, which has increased administrators’ abilities and influence as instructional leaders.

The district’s central administration and its elected Board have always supported community education services and parent involvement initiatives. The Community Education Department is made up of a district level director, a coordinator, a secretary, one full-time teacher, two part-time teachers, and nine school parent liaisons. Consistent with the diverse needs of parents in the district, classes and workshops are available to parents and include Parent Leadership Conference; school based parent workshops related to student learning; Family

Literacy I, II, III, and IV; Parent-Child Kindergarten Readiness; Basic Technology classes and GED Preparation.

Despite high parent turnout at training workshops and other involvement opportunities, the results with respect to student achievement did not demonstrate direct gains as a result of parent involvement. This led to an in-depth analysis of the context and focus of the parent involvement opportunities that were offered in the nine schools.

The analysis indicated that in our Title I schools, 99% of time, effort, and resources for parent involvement opportunities were mostly disconnected from student academic achievement. The only opportunity directly related to student achievement was the traditional parent-teacher conferences. See Figure 1.



- FAST Program
- Title I Orientation

(30 to 40 minutes a year)

Figure 1. This figure highlights the events and activities organized by the schools. In some cases the activities are in partnership with community agencies. The left column lists activities and events that may take place one or more times a year. The lower right portion of the figure shows parent-teacher conferences as the only event hosted by classroom teachers that is targeted to students' academic progress.

Schools were not making a clear distinction between involvement activities that were social, celebratory, and informational in nature and those that were explicitly about the academic progress of students. The lack of a specific connection between school activities and student achievement was liable to desensitize parents from participating. Because the majority of school activities were not academically targeted, it was natural that many parents lost interest in being involved. At the district level, there were also very limited opportunities for parent development that provided group or individual academic training necessary for parents to be meaningfully involved with student learning. Once a year, the Community Education Department holds a Parent Leadership Conference. Fifteen parents from each school are invited, which allows a total of 135 participants. This year there were three sessions: student classroom placement, discipline and leadership, and Academic Parent-Teacher Teams. The conference evaluations revealed that over 95% of participants indicated that the following three important school-related matters were totally new to them: (a) knowledge regarding student reading levels as measured by the STEEP test, (b) language proficiency and placement as determined by the AZELLA English language

assessment tool, and (c) understanding that student mobility was a big challenge for teachers, students, and school improvement.

Not only did parents appear to be unaware of the current evaluations and issues in their district, they also tended to have had low levels of academic attainment. In 2007 and 2008, over 2,000 district parents registered for community education classes and workshops. With respect to demographics, registration forms indicated, 65% of parents had less than an eighth-grade education, 20% had some high school education, 14% had completed high school, and only 1% had college degrees. The parent demographic information provided meaningful insights. First, the present district model for parent involvement opportunities was much too general in scope. It was not aligned with the educational experiences of the population it served. Second, the parent involvement program might be of more educational significance if it focused on providing parents with explicit information about helping their children attain educational goals through training, coaching, and goal setting to build parents' capacity to be more meaningfully involved in their children's education. For the purpose of my action research design, parent involvement in education was defined as parents having knowledge of their children's learning program, and being engaged in helping their children meet or exceed appropriate educational goals. Although minority status and low levels of parental education and linguistic abilities are not necessarily predictors of student achievement, it was important to

align district parent educational services with the available parental background information.

The prevailing district parent involvement model was based on offering a large assortment of large group activities as opportunities for parents to be involved. Prior to the study, parent involvement attendance records showed the same 15% to 20% of parents attended most of these kinds of large group events. As a result, the majority of families were not involved.

The school district prided itself on attaining an average of 95% attendance at parent teacher conferences. Parent-teacher conferences provided the only formal occasion for parents and teachers to interact and share important academic particulars about students. The high rate of attendance at conferences indicated that most parents in the district valued the information and attention directed at their children while conferencing with teachers. Beside parent-teacher conferences, the second most well attended event for all nine schools was Meet the Teacher/Open House. Coincidentally, these two events were the only opportunities for parents to directly meet and interact with their children's classroom teacher. By comparison, the much lower levels of participation in other parental involvement activities not linked to their children's teachers attested to parents' unwillingness to attribute importance to events that were disconnected from children's learning.

The disconcerting findings associated with the inverted school parent involvement opportunities pyramid prompted the development of Academic

Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT). APTT inverts the types of parental involvement activities so the emphasis in the pyramid is on parental involvement led by the classroom teacher to facilitate student learning and attainment. The focal point of parent involvement opportunities becomes the quality and quantity of parent-teacher interaction about student learning. APTT offers a paradigm shift in school parent involvement for teachers, parents, students, and administrators. Instead of random social, celebratory, and informational events being the almost exclusive option in which parents were involved, the goal became developing partnerships between parents and teachers with an emphasis on building parents' capacity to be a key member of the educational team by more effectively supporting their children's academic growth.

During the 2009-2010 school year, 10 classrooms with 195 students participated in a yearlong pilot of the APTT program. This new model for parent involvement was designed to be consistent with decades of valuable research in the field of parent involvement (Chrispeels, 2001; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau, 1987; Mapp, 2003; Martinez-Cosio, 2007; Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). These studies pointed to the following important characteristics for effective parent involvement programs: they were centered around student achievement, they were internally developed and maintained, they were focused on coaching parents on basic key skills to elevate their capacity to assist their children with academic learning, they afforded parents an opportunity

to redefine their parenting role to include their children's academic achievement, and they provided the opportunity for teachers to improve their skills for effectively interacting with minority parents.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

GUIDING THE PROJECT

The theoretical perspectives and research guiding the project are presented in four sections. In the first section, literature related to cultural capital is considered. Following that section, information related to parental involvement programs and action research are reviewed. In the concluding section, implications for the current action research project are explored.

Cultural Capital and Concerted Cultivation

Pierre Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) theory of cultural capital serves as the primary framework underlying this innovation. For Bourdieu, cultural capital is the socialization outcome that results in attainments being reserved for the elite and noble through generations of privilege, experience, and sophistication. Elite

cultural capital encompasses knowledge of the arts, literature, music, and all manners of elite taste and behavior, which families enjoy generation after generation and which becomes the common environment and context of further socialization. In a French context, Bourdieu argues that educational institutions are not value neutral; instead they are laden with the values of the dominant class. When middle and upper-middle class students enter school, they arrive with and have the ability to activate distinctive language, behaviors, attitudes and actions that are preferred and rewarded by educators. Family acquired knowledge of cultural capital that is aligned with school values provides an advantage for these students over others. Students from more humble origins have cultural capital which may not be aligned with school values and need to acquire academic skills and reposition their funds of knowledge to learn to emulate those acclaimed modalities of their more wealthy counterparts without having attained the same first-hand experiences before entering school. Bourdieu's analysis centered around the way schools contribute to the reproduction of the structure of power, privilege, and position by continuing to support unspoken cultural standards. Schools have unwritten expectations of students being intimately familiar with school traditions, the arts, advanced vocabulary and pronunciation, personal taste, and a developed sense of creativity, all of which are based on experiences most often reserved for the wealthy. In summary, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital posits that students in a position of privilege have an inherited and family constructed set of social advantages that are consistent with those needed to rise

to the top in the educational system that is in place. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory serves as the key point of departure around which this action research journey is organized.

A second, closer to home theory that frames this action research project is Annette Lareau's (2003) "concerted cultivation." Lareau imports Bourdieu's cultural capital into the American family and educational context. Through intensive, groundbreaking ethnographic research, Lareau provides a transparent analysis of the family mechanisms involved in social transmission of class status and academic success. Lareau observed and interviewed families of several children from lower SES backgrounds, from middle class homes, and from upper-middle class homes where parents were professionals. The focus of her research was to examine: (a) the time used for children's leisure activities, (b) the way language was used in the family, and (c) how adults were involved with their children's social and educational lives.

She found that across social classes all families had many characteristics in common. They all had a similar degree of emotional connection, all families had rituals they practiced together which determined their daily activities, all families had tragedies and misfortune, all families had individuals with different temperaments and personalities, and all families had differing degrees of home organization and orderliness. As Lareau (2003) stated, "they all felt like home" (p. 238). Although all families had clear similarities, the differences among them were marked according to social class, with middle and upper-middle class

families being engaged in concerted cultivation of their children's development. These families carefully assessed their children's talents and fostered them by organizing and structuring their "free time" to include lessons and organized activities. These families placed emphasis on communication, opinions, social skills, assertiveness, and the ability to skillfully negotiate on one's behalf. These parents were also highly aware of social and cognitive development, so games and activities were used to target these ends.

Lareau's observations revealed that middle and upper-middle class families focused their energies and efforts to provide their children with skills needed to be college-ready, driven, high achievers to the point where many of them suffered from an excessive sense of entitlement. The theory of concerted cultivation provided practitioners with a magnified view of some of the practices that explained the way professional, educated, privileged families ensured their children were prepared to replicate family successes.

Lareau's (1987, 2003) theory enriched my understanding and awareness of latent social exclusion practices often unwittingly carried out by school professionals as they rewarded children who had the ability to ignite actions, behaviors, and attitudes that were well-aligned with those possessed by their middle class teachers. This behavior by educators was not difficult to fathom given the nature and goals of contemporary education. Among other things, teachers are charged with the responsibility of preparing children to compete in high stakes tests and assessments. The survival of a teacher's and a school's

reputation rested on students' ability and drive to perform well, which was consistent with practices associated with concerted cultivation.

Now that I have provided a glance at details concerning the child rearing practices of privileged parents and how those practices are aligned with the American education system, what remains unclear is whether the principles associated with "concerted cultivation" can be shared with and learned by willing low SES parents to foster student learning. Specifically, can low SES parents implement strategies to encourage achievement and learning in their children by better knowing about the material being taught in the classroom, their child's strengths and weaknesses, and by being provided with appropriate 'teaching' strategies by the classroom teacher?

Parent Involvement Programs

In this section, information about parent involvement programs will be presented. Three parent involvement programs and strategies that have earned national recognition among researchers and educators in the field of parent involvement will be reviewed and discussed. Although there are many more recognized parental involvement programs, the scope of the review is limited to those most closely related to this action research project.

Joyce Epstein (1996) established The National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) to assist states and school districts in an effort to build

comprehensive programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The NNPS works primarily with inner-city, Title I schools. Its membership has grown from an original 202 schools to over 1,100, which speaks of the need for parent involvement initiatives. It is associated with the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University (NNPS Website, 2010). The NNPS model is research-based and offers schools, districts, states, and organizations a framework for organizing and implementing a parent and community involvement program. The school model includes four essential elements: an action team for partnerships, a framework of six types of involvement, a one-year action plan for partnerships, and a program evaluation component. The NNPS members receive professional development, including the manuals and literature that assist in following the appropriate steps for implementation. In addition to professional development, NNPS makes recommendations for improvement in policy and practice and publishes best practices that recognize successful models.

The framework upon which the NNPS school model is built is Epstein's (2002) six types of involvement:

- (a) Parenting—assisting families with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Also, assist schools to better understand families;

- (b) Communicating—conducting effective communications from school-to-home and from home-to-school about school programs and student progress;
- (c) Volunteering—organizing volunteers and audiences to support the school and students. Provide volunteering opportunities in various locations and at various times;
- (d) Learning at home—involving families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions;
- (e) Decision making—including families as participants in school decisions, and developing parent leaders and representatives; and
- (f) Collaborating with the community—coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students, and the school, and providing services to the community (p. 15).

For the context in which this action research is framed, the NNPS model has several limitations. First, the NNPS model is too broad in scope; it does not have as its priority specific action steps for regularly connecting parents and teachers to improve student learning. Second, to increase student achievement Title I schools need parents to be meaningfully involved in their children’s learning, which requires that teachers coach parents in academic skills to build their knowledge and capacity to be involved appropriately. Third, my district does not have the manpower or expertise to oversee the planning, implementation, and professional development of Action Teams for Partnerships at each school.

Fourth, the district is best served by an affordable, internal, systemic initiative that is sustainable and in which teachers and parents become the experts, with a goal that is first and foremost student learning. Finally, the NNPS does not meet the needs of my study population because it does not offer a solution to the district's present priority of increasing parent engagement and accountability in student achievement.

A second parent education program that has received considerable acclaim since 2006 in Arizona is the American Dream Academy (ADA), delivered by Arizona State University's Center for Community Development and Civil Rights. The nine-week curriculum for this program was first developed in California by the Parent Institute for Quality Education. The program focuses on empowering Latino parents with the values, tools, and information they need to become advocates for their children's education from the beginning of life through college graduation (ADA Website, 2009). Program facilitators serve as trained coaches who deliver the curriculum in the parents' home language with each weekly session lasting an hour-and-a-half. The topics of the workshops include: creating a home learning environment, navigating the school system, collaborating with teachers, counselors, and principals, encouraging college attendance, and supporting a child's emotional and social development.

All nine schools in the district have participated in ADA and parents who participated are very positive about newly gained understandings about their role in the process of educating their children. ADA is a positive program for the

Latino community in Arizona. Unfortunately, it has limitations in addressing the educational needs of students and families. Some of the restrictions include: schools have difficulty with utilizing their funds to cover the services because of shrinking educational budgets; teachers are not required to be involved at any level of the program so teachers are disconnected from the new information parents obtain; the program invites all school parents to participate but only a small number participate and those tend to be the ones who are already regularly involved. Finally, although ADA is a university program that aims to promote college readiness, it does not provide any type of bridge or opportunity for youth to be connected with the college campus youth programs nor does it mention other alternatives for professional development such as occupations in the trades that do not require a college degree.

Other drawbacks include: the lack of follow-through with parents who participated so there is limited data collection on student outcomes necessary to demonstrate the effects on students and families; its short duration, one-hour-and-a-half each week for eight weeks with the ninth week meeting dedicated to celebrating the parents' graduation; it is not an internal initiative so it does not build a systemic, sustainable solution. ADA provides important information to immigrant, working class parents seeking to increase their knowledge of the American educational system. Nevertheless, it is not aligned with the school's need to connect parents and teachers to foster student learning and because

participation is optional it does not ensure that a majority of parents become involved.

A third approach that warrants consideration is the use of bilingual school parent liaisons. Use of school parent liaisons has become an increasingly popular practice that Title I schools implement to build a closer connection between families and schools. An expansive body of literature documents the importance of home-school relations and the need for schools to create environments where families feel welcome and their efforts at being involved are validated by school personnel (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey, 2002; Howland et al., 2006; Lightfoot, 1980; Mapp, 2003; Martinez-Cosio, 2007; Sanders, 2008). School parent liaisons are charged with the responsibility of increasing parent involvement and being the bridge that connects parents to the schools. The role of the school parent liaison becomes even more important when schools serve minority populations who speak languages other than English. Parent liaisons often interpret during parent-teacher meetings or during school functions. They are cultural brokers who help parents decode the complex culture of schools (Martinez-Cosio, 2007).

The description of the responsibilities and qualifications of parent liaisons vary from school to school. At times liaisons are parent volunteers, sometimes they are classified, part- or full-time employees, and in some instances they are social workers, counselors or retired teachers. The value of the work that parent liaisons do in schools is indisputable, especially because parent involvement is a

requirement of Title I grants. The parent liaison model provides some solutions to parents feeling appreciated and welcomed in the school but this model is not sufficient to meet the needs of parents.

For example, the school parent liaison has limited knowledge and access to the academic student data, which parents need to know if they are to be fully informed about their child's academic strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, parent liaisons are not classroom teachers, for this reason they have limited knowledge about curriculum, academic skills and they often lack the expertise and ability to coach parents in the areas that can improve student achievement. Because the school parent liaison role varies from district to district, focused, formal training is limited. To date, the only formalized certification program for parent liaisons is offered by Rio Salado College. This newly developed, 25-credit certification program was initiated in the fall of 2009. Much work is yet to be done by the educational community to come to consensus on the most fruitful way to utilize school parent liaisons in schools to improve student learning and academic achievement.

Action Research

A variety of action research approaches are in current use, ranging from critical action research to practical classroom action research based on personal interests and local contextual issues. Critical action is derived from theoretical perspectives such as critical theory or postmodernism and focuses on gathering information that results in emancipatory outcomes. On the other end of the

spectrum, practical action research focuses on the teacher as researcher and decision maker. In this action research perspective, teachers are primarily concerned with ‘how to influence daily practice’ rather than theoretical conceptualizations.

This action research study is situated between the critical action research perspective and the practical action research approach. It is rooted in the theoretical perspectives in the sense that it is “ ... *democratic* ..., *equitable* ..., *liberating* ..., [and] life *enhancing*, enabling the expression of people’s full human potential” (Stringer, 2007, p. 11). It is practical in sense that it aims to find a solution to local problem. Specifically, this action research study capitalizes on untapped parent, teacher and student aspirations, abilities and resources to implement a more effective approach to parent-teacher collaboration that ultimately fosters increased student learning.

Implications

The overwhelming majority of programs developed to increase parent involvement in Title I schools fall short of meeting the needs that schools have to close the academic gap that exists between students of different social classes. Not meeting state or national academic standards has become a badge of disgrace as these labels of failure are published for all to see. Moreover, with poor test scores come low teacher morale, greater scrutiny by the Department of Education, and distrust of the school by parents and the community. School improvement plans have at their center the objective of improving student learning and raising scores

on standardized tests, and part of that objective includes increasing meaningful parent involvement. That is an important consideration given that children spend the majority of their time with their parents and family.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest three constructs that influence parents' decision to become involved: (a) parental role construction, (b) parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children attain school success, and (c) parents' perceptions of invitations, demands and opportunities extended by their children and the school. First, parents' role construction are constituted by the beliefs of what they are supposed to do for their children with respect to education, what is important and necessary in education, and what they perceive themselves as being able to do. Parents' sense of efficacy refers to their ability to successfully help their children with schoolwork. Lastly, parents' perception of invitations refers to parents' beliefs about being wanted and needed by the child and the school in parent involvement activities.

Chrispeels and Rivero (2001) and Delgado-Gaitan (1998) offered research regarding parents in working class, minority communities, which has implications for the type of parent involvement programs that schools have a responsibility to implement. Latino immigrant families and other minority parents have an honest desire to see their children succeed. In Figure 2, a parent-made drawing shows the dreams of one mother for her five children. The word *éxito* means success. The picture demonstrates the mother has high aspirations for her five children. These

aspirations include a pilot of Air Force One, a language teacher abroad, a hotel and tourism professional, a naval officer, and an Olympic skier.



Figure 2. A parent draws the aspirations she holds for her five school-aged children. On the left top corner, she portrays one of her sons as a US Navy officer in charge of a ship. On the bottom left corner, another son is depicted as down hill skier competing in the Olympics. In the middle, a third son pilots Air Force One. At the top on the right, one of her daughters is represented as an English language teacher in Europe. Finally, her second daughter is portrayed with a degree in hotels and tourism. Every child is represented as having a college degree and is successful. *Exito* is the word for success in Spanish.

Parents have significant knowledge and experience to offer their children and the schools (Delgado-Gaitan 1988; Moles & Diaz, 1987). Parent involvement programs must capitalize on the knowledge and experience parents already possess, that is on their own cultural capital. Moreover, such programs must

provide additional education and training to help them in refining their parent role construction with respect to school learning so it is more in line with school values and expectations and age-appropriate requirements. Many years of experience in the field developing and implementing parent involvement programs have led me to conclude that for programs to be effective, teachers need to assume the role of a coach and teach parents the skills they need to become efficacious supporters of children's learning at home. Another very important lesson from the field is that not all minority groups in the United States face equal disadvantages. Hispanic parents in Arizona, especially undocumented families, have a nearly impossible road ahead as they face constant fear of arrest and deportation. Further, in spite of their children achieving academic excellence in public schools; their chance at a college education is inhibited by the lack of financial assistance as a result of Proposition 300, which requires proof of legal residency to obtain government funded scholarships, insured loans, and in-state resident tuition rates. These are unique challenges that schools and parent involvement programs must also address.

Title I schools must embrace a new model. In such a model, schools must move away from emphasizing parent programs that aim to teach parents social growth (that is really a job for partnering agencies), and instead create structures that focus on increasing parents' capacity to partner with teachers by increasing the quality and quantity of interaction and communication between parents and teachers. The message Title I schools send parents needs to change from 'you

need to be a better parent' to 'by becoming an active member of our educational team, we will coach you in the skills you need to be more effective in the way you help your child learn at home.' It is also essential that teachers personally ask parents to be involved as part of the teaching team so that parents can be clear about the type of involvement the school is requesting (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parents should be able to discern between non-academic invitations to activities and those that are specifically about their children's academic progress. Parent involvement programs that do not increase the quality and quantity of parent-teacher interaction typically are not consistent with the needs or goals of the school. For parents to be meaningfully involved, they must have explicit knowledge and understanding of children's progress. They need to know which skills are being learned in the classroom and they need to know when these skills will be tested so they can help prepare the child to be successful each time she is assessed.

The teacher is the person most qualified to coach parents in the skills they need to practice at home with their children. Concerted cultivation and cultural capital provide windows that allow us to see what affluent parents do to ensure their children have the advantages they need to succeed in our educational system. In a similar way, Title I schools need to establish the structures of support that provide economically disadvantaged parents an opportunity to increase their cultural capital as it relates to children's academic success and their ability to

network with other parents who have the same goals for their children (Delgado-Gaitan,1991).

Schools cannot do it alone and most current parent involvement strategies do not provide parents with the explicit knowledge and information they need to support the children's attainment of academic successes. It is not a partnership if one side does not provide the other partner access to important knowledge. Thus, establishment of strong communication procedures that provide for sharing of vital information will be essential in developing and sustaining meaningful parental involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Setting and Participants

In fall of 2010, 79 classrooms from kindergarten to eighth grade in all nine district schools implemented APTT. For the purpose of this study, a sample of nine first-grade classrooms, one in each school, was selected to participate and data were gathered from these classrooms. Teachers were selected to participate using the following criteria: the teacher was interested in working with parents and the principal and staff recommended participation. Each of the nine classrooms had between 20 and 30 students resulting in a total of approximately 230 students. The district has 33 first-grade classrooms and 24 of the 33 classrooms were English Language Development classrooms. The most compelling reason first-grade classrooms were selected as the sample for this study was the influence of early literacy skills on later academic success. Further, selection of first-grade parents attested to the important role parents can play in

student learning as they partner with the classroom teacher at the beginning of elementary education.

Approximately 230 families participated in this action research study. Typically, mothers were the primary participants in school involvement activities. Over 65% were work-at-home mothers with an average of three children per family. Over 85% of parents were monolingual Spanish speakers. For this reason, school meetings were conducted in English and Spanish with interpretation offered by the school parent liaison. Consistent with district demographics, 65% of the parents who participated had less than an eighth-grade education, 20% had some high school education, 14% completed high school, and only 1% had college degrees. Parents were predominantly Mexican immigrants and approximately 70% were undocumented.

Nine teachers were involved in APTT. All nine teachers were female, English speakers, with an English as a Second Language (ESL) Endorsement, which qualified them to teach English language learners. The participating teachers had between three and fifteen years of teaching experience and 25% had a Masters degree.

Approximately 230 first-grade students took part in APTT. Of the sample, 85% were Hispanic; 5% were White; 5% Indian; 5% African American; 48% female; 52% male; and 90% received free or reduced lunch. In first grade, 75% of students in the district were primarily Spanish speakers in the English Language Development program. For this reason, they received four hours of English

instruction per day as required by state law. Parents' personal accounts led me to estimate that about 70% of students in the district were American citizens, whereas, 30% were undocumented.

Nine bilingual school parent liaisons, one from each school, participated in APTT. School parent liaisons were full-time classified staff members whose primary responsibility was to implement parent involvement programs at each school. In this district, school parent liaisons received six hours of group professional development per month. Parent liaisons ranged from 25 to 45 years of age and their experience in the field ranged from one to seven years. Seven of the nine liaisons lived within district boundaries and were parents of students who attended district schools.

This action research project also used the assistance of nine Title I facilitators, one from each school. Their primary role in the school is to serve as compliance monitors for Title I and Program Coordinators. They also assisted parent liaisons and the schools with implementing parent involvement programs. They were essential in this area of programming because of their valuable knowledge of grade-level academic skills and their teaching and training experience. They were between 30 and 58 years of age, and they all had more than seven years of teaching experience. All nine Title I facilitators were Caucasian, monolingual English speakers so they worked collaboratively with parent liaisons to assist the classroom teachers in interpreting during parent-teacher team meetings.

As the Director of the Community Education Department for the district, my role was to ensure successful implementation of parent involvement programs that positively affected student achievement across the district. As director, researcher, and developer of APTT, I was involved in delivering the APTT professional development to all participating staff. I participated in many of the parent-teacher team meetings. I also personally interviewed parents, teachers, and students. As a bilingual member of the implementation team, I was available to communicate with parents, teachers, school administrators, Title I facilitators, and school parent liaisons to clarify any questions or concerns. As an employee of the district for the last 13 years I worked closely with parents and I was intimately involved in paving the way for transition from the traditional model to the new model of parent involvement.

Intervention

APTT is a model focused on increasing student achievement by improving the quality and quantity of parent-teacher academic interaction. The program was designed to coach parents to be more engaged, knowledgeable members of the academic team by providing explicit, individual student information, establishing attainment goals for each child, modeling ways for parents to work with their child, and providing appropriate teaching materials for parents.

APTT had two main implementation components. The implementation of APTT included a 75-minute classroom team meeting that took place three times per year. The first team meeting was held during August and September 2010.

The second team meeting took place in early December 2010, and the third will occur in April 2011. The scope of this action research only allowed for collection of data between August and December 2010. The team meetings were composed of six key elements.

Personal invitation—Each participating teacher sent her classroom parents a personal letter of invitation to participate in APTT. The letter explained that the purpose of the team meeting was to review important student performance data, to set academic goals together that would help their children’s success as a student, and to provide training and materials to assist parents working with the children. The personal invitation was followed up by a phone call from the school parent liaison to ensure that the invitation letter had been received and understood.

Clear and explicit student performance data—The teacher provided parents with whole-class data and with their child’s baseline data in reading, writing, and mathematics. Data were carefully explained to ensure all parents gained a full understanding of their child’s academic standing.

Set 60-day improvement goals—The data report showed the student’s academic standing in relationship to ideal grade level performance. Based on this information, a 60-day academic goal was established for each student. This goal provided motivation and focus for parental involvement with students at home. Moreover, the teacher obtained a verbal commitment from parents to practice with the child regularly to reach the goal in 60 days.

Teacher demonstration of skills—Using visual aids, teachers modeled two or three activities and strategies for parents to use at home with the students. Teachers answered parents’ questions regarding the activities that were modeled. They also provided information about frequency and duration with respect to performing the instructional activities.

Parent practice of skills—The teacher distributed free materials and parents practiced the skills demonstrated by the teacher with other parents in the class. Sufficient time was provided for parents to feel comfortable and capable of successfully reproducing the activities.

Building a social network—On team meeting day, the classroom teacher welcomed parents and thanked them for their participation and interest in their children. Parents had the opportunity to meet and talk to other parents in the class. The teacher expressed the importance of sharing knowledge and information and how team collaboration is essential for the success of all students.

The second implementation component was a 30-minute individual parent-teacher conference that took place between September and November. Teachers scheduled parents with high need students first. More than one individual conference took place when necessary. The individual conference consisted of three key elements. The first was a student performance report. Teachers reviewed up-to-date individual performance reports with each parent. Teachers provided details about academic improvement, assessment, and any other academic details that could assist the parent in becoming more

knowledgeable about how to help the student. The second key element was an action plan. Teachers and parents agreed on next steps for ensuring continuous at-home practice of skills to meet the specified academic goal. The final element was networking. Teachers and parents shared important information about students that was social, emotional, and academic in nature. The teacher reminded parents of the importance of working as a team to ensure that time, energy, and resources were collaboratively shared.

In summary, APTT addressed three major constructs that were central to parental involvement: (a) parents' role construction of their beliefs about what they were supposed to do with respect to children's education, (b) parents' sense of efficacy for helping their children to succeed in school, and (c) parents' perception of invitations, demands, and opportunities for involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

APTT replaced the two traditional 20-minute parent-teacher conferences typically held in the fall and spring. This new parent involvement model implemented a systematic way to strengthen parent-teacher relations based on knowledge, collaboration, and commitment to students' achievement. For the purpose of this study, student achievement was defined as students' performance on the STEEP reading fluency tests and identification of high frequency words.

Timetable for Implementation

During the first week of the new school year 2010-2011, August 16 to 20, teachers, parents, students, school parent liaisons, and Title I facilitators were

asked to participate in the action research study. Each participating group was given a verbal explanation of the nature and importance of the study. Consent form (Appendix F) and parent permission letter (Appendix G) were provided and signatures were obtained from those who agreed to participate. All potential participants were informed that participation in the study was completely voluntary. They were also allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wished.

Training for participating teachers and Title I facilitators. In August 2010, all participating teachers and staff received comprehensive training regarding all areas of APTT implementation. The training took about two hours. A follow-up training meeting with teachers took place in October to debrief and to refine details of implementation for the second parent-teacher team meeting.

Training for parent liaisons. In August 2010, all nine, district parent liaisons received comprehensive training on their role in implementing APTT at their respective schools. Their role was central because it linked schools and families. The training took about three hours.

Action intervention. The first 75-minute team meeting for all schools took place between August 15 and September 15, 2010. This window of time allowed teachers to collect all pertinent student academic information to be shared with parents. Student data were necessary for parents and teachers to set 60-day goals at the time of their first team meeting.

The second 75-minute team meeting took place between December 1 and December 18, 2010. At this second team meeting, using the STEEP test scores and progress reports, parents and teachers reviewed the outcome of the goals set at the first team meeting and established new 60-day goals. Teachers demonstrated new activities related to the new goals, provided time for parents to practice the activities, and distributed take-home materials for parents. The APTT was a yearlong program, but for the purpose of this action research project, data were collected up to December 18, 2010. Title I facilitators and school parent liaisons were present at each of the team meetings in their own schools. As researcher and participant, I was present at 18 team meetings, two at each school.

The second component of APTT was an individual conference between parents and teachers. Teachers and parents set individual appointments and discussed in detail the particular strengths and weaknesses of students and collaborated in planning and implementing home and school strategies for academic success. These individual parent-teacher conferences took place between September and November of 2010. Parents and teachers met individually more than once when necessary. School parent liaisons were present at individual meetings when Spanish-English translation was required.

Instruments and Data Sources

The questions posed in this action research study were the following:

1. Was there an effect on parent involvement in school when parents participated in APTT?

2. Was there a change in parents' perception of their role in their child's academic achievement when teachers explicitly requested assistance with students' goals and schoolwork?
3. Did increased parent-teacher interaction and communication have an effect on student achievement?

To answer these questions, mixed methods of inquiry were utilized.

Quantitative Data. STEEP oral reading fluency data were collected for first-grade students in August and the last week of November. The results from the August testing served as baseline data for oral reading fluency. The November results provided comparison data to measure the effect of APTT on student progress.

High frequency words data were collected for students' knowledge of high frequency words in August and again during the last week of November. Based on the August results, 60-day goals were set for students by parents and teachers. Assessment results gathered in November reflected the students' new level of academic performance. High frequency words are those words that occur most frequently in grade-level reading texts. Mastery of grade-level high frequency words facilitates the development of reading fluency. Children are typically required to identify, read and write these words. For the purpose of this study, first-grade children needed only to identify the high frequency words.

Parent survey data consisting of pre- and a post-intervention Likert surveys were gathered from parents. Parents were asked to fill out the initial

survey during the first team meeting in August or September 2010. In December 2010, parents completed the post-intervention survey.

The pre-intervention survey consisted of five main constructs with four to nine questions each. These items measured parents' perceptions about (a) the friendliness of the school environment, (b) communication with the school, (c) involvement in education activities, (d) relationship with teachers, and (e) their role in education. For example, with respect to the topic of perceptions of parents' role in education, one question was, "I am responsible for maintaining communication with the teacher." One item from the scale that assessed parents' perception about communication with the school stated, "The school sends me information of parent events that I can attend." See Appendix A for the complete pre-intervention instrument.

The post-intervention survey was identical to the initial survey with one additional nine-item section dedicated to measuring the six key elements found in the APTT program: (a) being personally invited to participate, (b) building a social network, (c) having clear and explicit student performance data, (d) setting 60-day academic goals, (e) observing teacher demonstration of skills and parent practice of skills, and (f) two questions related to satisfaction with the program. For example, one of the questions was, "Having team meetings with other parents in the class was a positive experience for me." See Appendix B for the post-intervention survey. The surveys were designed using a four-point Likert scale with responses of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Qualitative Data. Five types of qualitative data were gathered. Field notes from APTT meetings were collected. Teacher interviews were conducted with all nine teachers. The interview had nine semi-structured questions designed to gather information related to the three research questions and to learn about APTT based on the experiences of the teacher. Two examples of items are: “What are your impressions about setting academic goals with parents for students?” and “Tell me about academic student performance related to participation in APTT?” See Appendix C for all the interview items. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Parent interviews were conducted with a total of 18 parents, two from each classroom. The interview had ten semi-structured questions designed to gather information related to the three research questions and to learn about APTT based on the experiences of participating parents. Two examples of items were: “What experiences are you having as a member of the Academic Parent-Teacher Team in your child’s classroom?” and “What kind of information do you receive when you attend APTT meetings?” See Appendix C for the parent interview questions. Interviews took place at the school and lasted between 30 and 50 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Student interviews were conducted with 18 students. These 18 students were the children of the 18 parents who were interviewed. Interviewing students and parents in the same family shed light on how the program affected families. The student interview had eight semi-structured questions that were designed to

learn about parent involvement in education based on the experiences of the students. Two examples of items were: “What do you do at home when you are with your parents?” and “Is there anyone at home who helps you with schoolwork?” See Appendix C for the student interview questions. Interviews lasted between 10 and 20 minutes and took place in the school at a time that did not interfere with instruction. The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Data consisting of teacher reflections were gathered. Reflections were written by the teachers after each parent-teacher team meeting to tell the story from their perspective of what took place during each APTT group session. The reflections were gathered electronically. The reflections were informal and personal in nature; they aimed to capture the mood or tone of the meeting, parent participation, interaction with parents, parent interaction with other parents, areas for improvement, and any other experiences that seemed unique.

Table 1 provides a summary of the actions undertaken to conduct the APTT procedures and the data collection process.

Table 1

Timeline of the study

Sequence	Actions	Procedures
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August to September 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of all participants for the project • Training for teachers • Training for parent liaisons • Parent pre-intervention survey • Gather STEEP and HFW baseline data • Teacher sends invitation letter to parents • First team meeting and 60-day goals • Scheduling of individual parent-teacher conference • Collect first round of teacher reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent forms and letters distributed • Workshop for teachers • Workshop for liaisons • Data collected • STEEP and HFW testing done • Ready-made letter template • Meetings conducted • Meetings scheduled • Teacher reflections collected
August to December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual parent-teacher meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings conducted
November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interviews • Parent interviews • Student interviews • Teacher sends second invitation letter to parents • Evaluate interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews conducted • Interviews conducted • Interviews conducted • Invitation letter sent • Coding and themes developed

December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather STEEP and HFW data • Second team meeting and 60-day goals • Parent post-intervention survey • Collect second round of teacher reflections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEEP and HFW testing done • Meetings conducted • Data collected • Teacher reflections collected
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Data Analysis

The research design for the study was a mixed method design in which three sets of preliminary quantitative data were collected: student baseline STEEP test scores, student baseline HFW test scores, and pre-intervention parent involvement survey responses. Post-intervention quantitative data collection included November STEEP test scores, November HFW test scores, and the post-intervention parent survey responses. These quantitative data were supplemented with qualitative data to better understand the findings. The qualitative data that were collected included post-intervention parent interviews, teacher interviews, student interviews, and teacher reflections of the parent-teacher team meetings.

Quantitative analysis. The STEEP and HFW test scores were used to assess any changes in student early literacy proficiency. Scores from August and November tests were compared to determine whether changes in academic growth occurred in student reading fluency and student ability to read and write HFW. These scores were also compared with expected grade-level performance for first graders in the district. The pre- and post-intervention parent surveys were utilized

to determine whether there was an influence of the APTT intervention on parent involvement practices, beliefs, and parent efficacy as related to student academic progress. Repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) and means and standard deviations for the pre- and post-intervention parent survey scores were presented to examine and describe parents' attitude, beliefs, and perceptions of the program. These results were used in conjunction with the qualitative data to attain a better understanding of the influence of APTT on student learning. Use of pre- and post-intervention data allowed for the examination of changes over time.

Qualitative Analysis. Qualitative data were used to augment the quantitative analysis. These data, including field notes from selected APTT meetings, parent interviews, teacher interviews, student interviews, and teacher reflections provided data related to parent involvement beliefs and practices that added another level of depth to the present study. A grounded theory approach was used to uncover emerging themes based on the qualitative data.

The qualitative data were analyzed to determine if there were patterns and themes using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Open coding, the first level of analysis was used to review the data from parent interviews, teacher interviews, student interviews, teachers' reflections, and jotted descriptive field notes from 16 parent-teacher team meetings. At the coding level, information was labeled and categorized. The second level of analysis was axial coding. At this level, repeated patterns or properties that connected the codes from the observations, interviews and reflections were organized into larger categories.

At the third level of analysis, I pondered and reflected on the two previous levels of analysis and developed a deeper level of insight about these categories by constructing theme-related components from which themes emerged.

After the themes were derived, member checks were conducted with the various groups that provided interview data. The member checks were carried out with 5 of the 9 teachers, 10 of 18 parents, and 10 of 18 students.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Results from the study are presented in two sections. In the first section, results from the quantitative data are presented. Following the results for the quantitative data, results for qualitative data are presented. For the qualitative data, assertions are presented and supported through theme-related components and quotes from participants. Prior to presenting the results, a brief section outlining the data sources and data collection procedures is offered to provide some context for the presentation of the results.

The quantitative data included: parent survey results, pre- and post-test scores for high frequency words, and pre- and post-test scores for reading fluency. Pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys were administered to parents to gauge their perceptions about parent involvement in education. The pre-intervention survey was administered in September before the first parent-teacher team meeting and it was comprised of five subscales totaling 35 questions, which assessed parent perceptions of their involvement in schools. The post-intervention survey was administered in December at the end of the second parent-teacher team meeting and it was comprised of six subscales totaling 44 questions. The

post-intervention survey included an additional nine-question subscale (my experience with the APTT program) to gauge parent level of satisfaction with the APTT intervention. One-hundred-sixty-five parents completed the pre-intervention survey as compared to 92 (56%) who completed both the pre- and post-intervention survey. The ability to collect data from the same individuals was hampered by family mobility and more interestingly by an inability to match the names of individuals who filled out the survey at the pre-test as compared to the post-test. Sometimes, couples took turns completing the forms at the two sessions, which did not allow matching of participants' names. This pre- and post-intervention assessment process allowed for the examination of change on these variables over the course of the project. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) procedures. Similarly, pre- and post-test scores for high frequency words and pre- and post-test scores for reading fluency were analyzed using separate repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) procedures.

The qualitative data included: parent interviews, student interviews, teacher interviews, teacher reflections and jotted descriptive field notes from 16 parent-teacher team meetings. Qualitative data were also collected in 18 parental interviews—two from each classroom, 18 student interviews—children of the 18 parents who were interviewed, and nine teacher interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes for teachers and parents and 15 minutes for students and they were digitally recorded. Additionally, 18 teacher reflections were coded

and analyzed. Each teacher wrote two open-ended reflections (one after each parent-teacher team meeting) on their feelings and perceptions about what transpired before, during and after each meeting. Qualitative data were collected during parent-teacher meetings using jotted notes (Sowell, 2000).

The qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In that procedure, open coding was initially conducted to identify ideas and concepts from the transcripts of the meeting, field notes, interview sessions and the teacher reflections. Subsequently, those open codes were gathered into larger categories using axial coding. Those larger categories led to theme-related concepts that suggested themes, which emerged from the data. The themes and theme-related components were examined and assertions were developed.

The first parent-teacher team meeting was conducted in September. During this meeting teachers shared whole-classroom and individual student benchmark assessment results for high frequency words (HFW) and for oral reading fluency (ORF). The school district standard for the end of first grade on HFW is 225 words and for ORF is 60 words per minute as assessed by the STEEP test. Each parent in collaboration with the classroom teacher wrote parent-student goals (HFW and ORF) to reach by November 30 and progress toward goals was evaluated during the second parent-teacher team meeting in December, following quarterly district assessment administered at the end of November. End of

November ORF scores constituted the final portion of quantitative data collected for this action research study.

These quantitative and qualitative data provided results that contributed to answering the following research questions, “Is there an effect on parent involvement in school when parents participate in APTT?”; “Is there a change in parents’ perception of their role in their child’s academic achievement when teachers explicitly request assistance with student goals and schoolwork?”; and “Does increased parent-teacher interaction and communication have an effect on student achievement?”

Results

Results from Quantitative Data

Results from the quantitative data are presented in four sections. First information about the reliability of the survey of parent perceptions of their involvement in schools is presented. This is followed by the repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the five subscales of the survey along with descriptive statistics related to parents’ perceptions of their experiences with APTT. Then results are presented on student pre- and post-intervention performance on high frequency words, and student pre- and post-intervention performance on oral reading fluency.

Reliability of parent involvement survey. The pre- and post-intervention survey used to evaluate parents perceptions about their participation and involvement in the schools consisted of five subscales, which assessed their

perceptions of: (a) the school environment, (b) communication with the school, (c) school involvement activities, (d) relationships with teachers, and (e) role in the education of their child. Items on each of these subscales are clearly delineated in Appendices A and B for the pre- and post-test occasions. For each subscale, Cronbach's α was computed using SPSS to determine the reliability of the subscale. Based on the pre-test responses, the reliabilities for the subscales listed above were: .88, .92, .90, .93, and .93, respectively. The reliability for the perceptions about experiences with APTT, which was assessed only at the post-test, was .95. These reliability coefficients were substantial and attest to the reliability of the five subscales and the experiences with APTT subscale.

Results from parent involvement survey. As noted previously, 92 of 165 parents completed both the pre- and post-intervention survey of parent perceptions of involvement. A preliminary analysis showed there were not significant differences on the pre-test scores between those who completed both surveys and those who completed only the initial survey. In fact, differences on the pre-test scores for these two groups of participants were quite small, ranging from 0.02 to 0.09 points.

Five individual repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted, one for each of the five subscales of the parent involvement survey. For perceptions about the school environment, the repeated measures ANOVA was statistically significant, $F(1, 91) = 6.05, p < .016$. The effect size for this measure was $\eta^2 = .062$, which was a small effect size for a within- subjects design based on Cohen's criteria

(Olejnik & Algina, 2000). Pre- and post-test means and standard deviations for the school environment variable and the other four subscales of the survey are presented in Table 1. The repeated measures ANOVA for perceptions about communication with the school was statistically significant, $F(1, 91) = 6.65, p < .012$. The effect size was $\eta^2 = .068$, which was a small effect size for a within-subjects design based on Cohen's criteria. With respect to perceptions about school involvement activities, the repeated measures ANOVA was statistically significant, $F(1, 91) = 20.00, p < .001$. The effect size for this difference in means was $\eta^2 = .180$, which was a large effect size for a within-subjects design according to Cohen's criteria. The repeated measures ANOVA for perceptions of relationships with teachers was statistically significant, $F(1, 91) = 27.01, p < .001$. The effect size was $\eta^2 = .229$, which was a large effect size for a within-subjects design based on Cohen's criteria. Finally, the repeated measures ANOVA for role in educating the child was not statistically significant, $F(1, 91) = 3.42, p < .068$; indicating there was no difference between the pre- and post-intervention means for this measure.

Table 2

Pre- and Post-test Scores on the Five Subscales of the Parent Involvement Survey

Subscale	Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	SD	M	SD
School Environment	3.50	0.47	3.64	0.44
Communication with School	3.51	0.45	3.66	0.43

School Involvement Activities	3.34	0.52	3.63	0.42
Relationship with Teachers	3.26	0.58	3.60	0.42
<u>Role in Educating Child</u>	<u>3.68</u>	<u>0.39</u>	<u>3.77</u>	<u>0.36</u>

With respect to their experiences with APTT, which was assessed only at the end of the study, results indicated parents viewed their participation in APTT in a positive way. The mean score was 3.74 out of a possible 4 with a SD = 0.38.

Results from student performance on high frequency words. A

repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the pre- and post-intervention scores for performance on high frequency words for 201 students who had both pre- and post-test scores. The repeated measures ANOVA showed there was a statistically significant difference between the means, $F(1, 200) = 488.95, p < .001$. The post-test score, $M = 114.88$ and $SD = 65.77$ was significantly greater than the pre-test score, $M = 50.24$ and $SD = 50.21$. The effect size was $\eta^2 = .710$, an exceptionally large effect size for a within-subjects design based on Cohen's criteria. Moreover, the post-test value of 114.88 high frequency words correct indicated students attained scores close to the value expected for the middle of first grade, which is approximately 112, approximately one-half of 225 high frequency words students should know by the end of first grade. These gains are substantial considering the 60-day timeline on parent-student academic goals and these results were obtained five weeks before the start of third quarter in January.

Results from student performance on the reading fluency measure. A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the pre- and post-intervention scores for reading fluency for 188 students who had both pre- and post-test scores. The repeated measures ANOVA showed there was a statistically significant difference between the means, $F(1, 187) = 464.70, p < .001$. The post-test score, $M = 40.31$ and $SD = 26.12$ was significantly greater than the pre-test score, $M = 15.55$ and $SD = 16.33$. The effect size was $\eta^2 = .713$, an exceptionally large effect size for a within- subjects design based on Cohen's criteria. Additionally, the post-test value of 40.31 words per minute indicated students attained fluency scores that exceeded the value expected for the middle of first grade, which is approximately 30 words per minute, approximately one-half of 60 words per minute, which would be required at the end of first grade. Again, these gains in reading fluency are significant considering the 60-day timeline on parent-student academic goals and these results were obtained five weeks before the start of third quarter in January.

Results from regression and correlational analyses of increased parental communication and interaction with teachers and students' academic performance. To address research question 3, data from 80 students were used in two separate regression analyses to determine whether increased communication and interactions between parents and teachers influenced students' academic achievement. In the first regression analysis, post-test high frequency words scores were regressed on three predictor variables from the post-

intervention parents' survey: (a) communication with the school, (b) school involvement activities, and (c) relationship with the teacher. The results from this regression analysis were not significant, $F(3, 76) = 2.18, p < .10$; and $R^2 = .079$. Similarly, in the second regression analysis, post-test reading fluency scores were regressed on the same three predictor variables from the post-intervention parents' survey. The results from this regression analysis also were not significant, $F(3, 76) = 1.86, p < .15$; and $R^2 = .068$. In each case lack of variability in the predictor variables limited their utility in predicting the academic achievement variables.

Individual correlations of the three post-test survey variables with the academic measures confirmed these results. The correlations between post-test high frequency words scores and the three post-test survey subscales noted above were: .20, .26, and .12, respectively. Likewise, the correlations between post-test reading fluency scores and the three post-test survey subscales from above were: .23, .24, and .14, respectively. The variance accounted for by the individual variables ranged from about 1.5% to 6.8%, which indicates these variables were extremely limited in their association with academic performance. Taken together, these quantitative results do not provide evidence that supports the premise that greater parent involvement resulted in higher academic performance.

Results from Qualitative Data

To better understand the quantitative findings a qualitative approach was used to describe situations, feelings, opinions, occurrences and patterns that developed during the five-month data collection period. These data were based on

parent interviews, student interviews, teacher interviews, teacher reflections, and jotted descriptive field notes from team meetings.

Table 3

Description of Qualitative Sources

Data Source	Word Count
Parent Interviews	47,539
Student Interviews	9,930
Teacher Interviews	36,792
Teacher reflections	14,458
Field Notes	17,305
Total Word Count	126,024

Table 3 provides details regarding the quantity of the qualitative data.

Interview and reflection questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to elaborate and expand on their views and experiences with the APTT model of involvement. Data sources included 9 teacher interviews, 18 teacher reflections, 18 parent interviews and 18 student interviews and filed notes.

In the analysis of the qualitative data sources 95 total codes were identified. Codes were further grouped into five themes. See Table 4. The themes were: (a) parent teacher communication; (b) parent engagement; (c) teacher efficacy in leading classroom parent engagement; (d) student engagement, confidence and learning performance; and (e) academic parent teacher teams as a school model for parent involvement in education. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the themes, theme-related components, and assertions associated with each theme.

Table 4

Themes, Theme-related Components and Assertions

<i>Themes*</i> and Theme-related Components	Assertions
<p><i>Parent-teacher communication</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharing whole-class and individual student data during team meetings was a new experience for parents and teachers alike. 2. The increased time for communication and collaboration was academically targeted. 3. Teachers provided parents with increased awareness of student data and grade level learning objectives. 4. Parents appreciated receiving coaching and take home materials provided at parent-teacher team meetings. 5. Parents and teachers were on the same page about academic expectations and target grade-level performance. 	<p>The quality and quantity of the academic information teachers shared with parents increased awareness and facilitated shared effort in the student learning process.</p>
<p><i>Parent engagement</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents demonstrated commitment to implement activities and use materials shared by teachers during team meetings. 2. Parents were involved in attempting to reach their 60-day goals using materials provided by the teacher 3. Team and individual meetings with teachers helped parents become clearer about their role in the educational process 4. Parents dedicated additional time beyond homework to studying alongside their children to attain their goals 	<p>Parents welcomed teachers' invitations to be involved and to be held to a higher set of expectations for engagement because coaching and support were provided.</p>

<p><i>Teacher efficacy in leading classroom parent engagement</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher concerns with the APTT process changed; they became advocates of the model. 2. Teachers' initial perceptions of parents changed. 3. Teachers provided coaching, motivation and feedback to parents regularly. 4. APTT made life easier for a teacher when parents shared in the responsibility; the time spent preparing for meetings paid dividends. 	<p>Teachers' ability to lead and motivate their parent classroom communities was a process of adaptation, time commitment and preparedness.</p>
<p><i>Student engagement, confidence and learning performance</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents individually helped and encouraged students with homework and studying to meet academic goals. 2. When students and parents learned how to go beyond homework, academic improvement was evident earlier in the year. 3. Students were aware of their own academic goals and engaged in monitoring their progress. 4. Increased student practice at home, motivation and confidence lead to mastery of academic goals. 	<p>Many students met or exceeded academic expectations with confidence when parents and teachers created collaborative structures of support.</p>

<p><i>Academic Parent Teacher teams as school model for parent involvement in education</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent-teacher communication was more regular and it was focused on academics. 2. Sharing group and individual data and communicating with all parents at once created a community with one vision. 3. Parents and teachers preferred the APTT model over traditional conferences. 4. Setting academic goals promoted motivation and engagement. 	<p>APTT provided the additional time and structure teachers needed to share expectations, data, activities and materials that parents needed to be engaged in the student learning process.</p>
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*--Note: Themes are in italic print.

Parent-teacher communication. Assertion 1—*The quality and quantity of the academic information teachers shared with parents increased awareness and facilitated shared effort in the student learning process.* The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme leading to this assertion: (a) sharing whole-class and individual student data during team meetings was a new experience for parents and teachers alike; (b) the increased time for communication and collaboration was academically targeted; (c) teachers provided parents with increased awareness of student data and grade-level learning objectives; (d) parents appreciated receiving coaching and take home materials provided at parent-teacher team meetings; (e) parents and teachers were on the same page about academic expectations and target grade level performance.

Parents and teachers participated in two 75-minute team meetings and a 30-minute individual conference. Communication was important for both parents and teachers. Teacher #6 appreciated added time to interact with parents and said, “The biggest thing is just having more time to interact with parents, to explain everything in detail” (Teacher interview, November 1). In many instances, parents and teachers reported communicating more regularly for the purpose of clarifying questions and to give feedback on student progress. The extended time for communication and nature of the communication led parents to feel they were more informed. They had greater awareness of what was expected by the teacher and a better understanding of grade level learning objectives that needed to be mastered by the student. Parents, teachers and students made numerous comments in support of this contention. Parent #6 expressed this perspective when she affirmed, “The information the teacher gives me helps very much. If I didn’t go to the meeting, if I didn’t get this information from the teacher, who would help me? Nobody else gives me explanations on how to help my son” (Parent interview, November 1).

Participants showed appreciation of the additional time used to share information. They felt this approach was positive and different. Teacher #2 reported changes in her relationships with parents when she commented, “My communication with parents is totally different than in past years. The parents know what questions to ask and I think that’s the key, before they didn’t have any clue where to start” (Teacher interview, October 29). Parent #3 indicated her

satisfaction with increased communication when she noted, “What helps you most is the communication with the teacher, if you know how your child is doing and what academic areas need studying (sic) because the teacher is communicating with you” (Parent interview, November 9).

Students were also cognizant of the increased communication between parents and teachers. Student #12, observed how his mom and the teacher interacted and he described it by saying, “My mom and my teacher talk. They talk about school” (Student interview, November 11).

The increased time for communication had the effect of creating a fresh start between parents and teachers. Using simple to understand graphs, teachers presented student benchmark assessment scores on HFW and ORF. Each student was assigned a number to ensure student privacy. The number was available to each parent with the appropriate individual scores in a private folder. No assumptions were made about what parents should or should not know about the educational process. Sharing whole group and individual student data was a key aspect of the intervention. Sharing data proved to be an eye-opening experience for parents. The statistical information enabled parents to have a context in which to understand achievement standards, grade level learning objectives with time lines and how their child’s performance compared to the performance of others in the classroom and the standards expected of first-grade students.

Parent #1 gained a better understanding of her child’s progress when the teacher used graphs, she confirmed this claim when she declared, “The graphs the

teacher shows help me learn more about the children and what areas they need to improve. When report cards are sent home, they have letters and some of us don't understand that so it is better with graphs and the teacher explains them and tells you what is going on" (Parent interview, November 2).

Sharing data and key grade level learning objectives in simple and direct terms had the effect of providing information to parents that was comprehensible and led to an action. Parents were able to identify the first step of their involvement in helping their student academically. For the initial meeting parents learned about high frequency words and reading fluency. As expected, classes were composed of students exhibiting all ranges of skill level—above, on, and below grade level. Parents had individual, private folders with a number inside that allowed them to coordinate the level of performance of their child with those on the graph. Parent #7 had this reaction to the data when she explained, "When I saw the graph it showed that my son didn't know any words...I went home and told my son we are going to study together. We are going to learn the words... next meeting we will be much higher" (Parent Interview, November 16). Teacher #5 observed that sharing data had a direct utility for parents when she commented, "Data gives parents insight into how far a child can go, how much a child can learn...it shows success is achievable. There is just work you have to do to get there" (Teacher interview, November 15).

Sharing benchmark student data during the first team meeting, early in the beginning of the year, made it possible for parents to set realistic, short-term

student academic goals for their child. The bar graphs had lines going across to show where students were expected to be at the beginning of the year in early September, at the end of second quarter in December, and the end of first grade in May. Based on the shared data, parents and teachers collaboratively set two 60-day academic goals for each student. The first 60-day academic goal consisted of learning a determined number of high frequency words to be as close to grade level as possible which was 90 words or higher by the end of November. Some students had higher goals if their initial score was on or close to grade level. The second 60-day goal was to increase their reading fluency score to reach 25 or more accurately read words per minute by the end of November.

To help parents understand how they could help their students at home to reach their goals, teachers demonstrated two activities focused on the practice of HFW and reading fluency. Parents were given materials to take home that matched the demonstrated activities. These materials included word cards, stop watches for timing one-minute reading exercises and word games. The coaching and materials provided by teachers received an overwhelmingly positive response from parents and students. Parent #11 appreciated the coaching during the team meeting and she expressed it when she acknowledged, “What I liked the most... was the way the teacher showed us what to do when my son doesn’t know a word he has to write it and color over it with different colors and say it until he knows it” (Parent interview, November 10). Parent #17 felt that having been coached by the teacher had great value to him. He realized he needed help and conveyed these

thoughts when he affirmed, “For me I don’t know how to teach my kids, it is difficult...this is more interactive...she is teaching us how to teach our kids...it really highlights our responsibility...I think it makes a big difference” (Parent interview, November 18).

Communication between parents and teachers included an action plan in the form of developing academic goals to help children increase their learning and to help parents become more comfortable with practicing academic skills at home and sharing the responsibility of teaching. Teachers repeatedly assured parents that they were welcome to make additional appointments for extended conversation and they could request additional coaching from the parent liaison if they needed it. Because goals and expectations were aligned between home and school, students received targeted, more consistent assistance and support of learning.

Parent engagement. Assertion 2—*Parents welcomed teachers’ invitation to be involved and to be held to a higher set of expectations for engagement when coaching and support were provided.* Traditionally, parent involvement has been interpreted by families and schools to include attending school events, volunteering, joining PTA/PTO, assisting with homework, and attending parent-teacher conferences. Thus, parent involvement typically has not focused on children’s academic performance. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme leading to this assertion: (a) parents demonstrated commitment to implement at home what they learned at team meetings;

(b) parents got involved in attempting to reach their 60-day goals using materials provided by the teacher; (c) team and individual meetings with teachers helped parents become more clear about their role in the educational process; and (d) parents dedicated additional time beyond homework to facilitate additional studying to aid their children in attaining their goals.

Because APTT was classroom specific and was facilitated by the teacher, it provided personal meaning to parents. All shared information was relevant and focused on improving the learning and performance of students in the class. Parent-teacher team meetings incorporated sharing of whole-class and individual student data. Teachers provided coaching on activities to do at home, parents and teachers set 60-day academic goals for each student and practice materials were given to parents. The combination of these factors resulted in most parents becoming meaningfully engaged in the specific skill practice requested by the teacher. Student goals provided parents with a clear and explicit opportunity to help their children at home and served as a challenge to be attained prior to the next team meeting. Parent #18 was positive in her acceptance of the teacher's request for help. She described her new role in this way, "I think these meetings are good, we can help the teacher and not just [let] her do all the work...we can now go home and teach our kids" (Parent interview, November 19). Parent #2 described how he and his daughter practiced at home and how he used the materials, "The teacher gave me a CD of words that we play two times every day...that is how she remembers the words...we do that after she does her

homework...we also use a blackboard that we have in our living room” (Parent interview, November 10). Students were also noticing a difference in how parents were now spending time with them. The interactions no longer stopped at homework, but the help went beyond to include the practice of the words and reading fluency. Parents shared their experiences at team meetings and new responsibilities with other members of the family so they could help their child meet their academic goals. Student #8 described how her brother and mom helped her practice HFW when she stated, “My brother and my mom help me...I say to my brother can you help me...bring me your words...I say them... I do all of the words and he says you got them all right” (Student interview, November 22).

During parent-teacher team meetings, teachers shared class and individual student data, set 60-day goals, provided coaching, and distributed materials for practice at home. This information and greater understanding of key grade level learning objectives gave parents context and purpose for increasing their involvement in the teaching and learning process. Before participation in team meetings parents had homework and report cards as the primary or only sources information. Such information was limited and offered them little assistance or motivation to become engaged. The clarity and explicitness of the new information fostered in parents a new perspective of their potential impact on children’s practice of skills and progress toward grade-level performance expectations. Teacher #1 confirmed the need parents had for additional information when she declared, “In order to help parents successfully work with

their children at home, I need to give them the tools and information necessary to empower them and hold them accountable for their child's learning" (Teacher reflection, December 4). Parent #12 explained that her increased engagement came from having the right information when she affirmed, "Before we only did homework and that was it. We didn't do the word games that we have now. It was just homework that was all she brought home" (Parent interview, November 17). Parent #10 got fully involved with her child in achieving the academic goal and she indicated how they practiced when she acknowledged, "We sit and review the words...when she knows them then we write them down on a little board we got...We also read books and that is when I realized that she now knows how to pronounce the words because she didn't know that before" (Parent interview, November 10).

Before APTT, parents perceived their responsibility in education as being accountable for homework completion. In most instances parents felt that students should be able to do their homework without assistance so they stayed away from physically sitting with their children while completing schoolwork. During the parent-teacher team meeting, teachers explained the importance of being present and sitting with their children while doing schoolwork to provide them motivation, assistance and accountability. When parents took on the challenge and helped their children at home, these efforts were noticeable to teachers in the classroom. Teachers noticed students made connections more quickly and students shared openly with pride that they practiced at home with their parents.

Teacher #3 described her observation when she noted, “When parents put in the time I notice two things: students apply at school what they have learned at home and they love to brag about what their families do with them at home” (Teacher reflection, November 9). Increased communication and explicit teacher requests for involvement provided parents with a clear path for engagement. Moreover, such communication made explicit the implicit wishes teachers had for help from parents. Parent #10 provided insight into her new understanding of her role when she mentioned, “The only thing I did before now was drop her off at school and tell her ‘do a good job [for] mommy’, I didn’t know the importance of me sitting down with her to help her with her schoolwork, of me being involved” (Parent interview, October 26). Student #15 explained how his family was now involved when he stated, “My mom and my sister help me...when I read a book and they put a time on it...they help me with the letters how to sound them out and then I do my spelling words” (Student interview, November 22).

Overall, high rates of parental participation were evident. Nevertheless, on average, 10 to 15 percent of parents did not participate fully in APTT. These data were substantiated by student test scores and teachers’ comments.

Teacher efficacy in leading classroom parent engagement. Assertion 3 —*Teachers’ ability to lead and motivate their parent classroom community was a process of adaptation, time commitment and preparedness.* The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme leading to this assertion:

(a) teacher concerns with the new model changed, they became advocates of the program; (b) teachers' initial perceptions of parents changed;

(c) teachers provided coaching, motivation and feedback to parents regularly; and

(d) APTT made life easier for a teacher when parents shared in the responsibility; the time spent preparing for meetings paid dividends.

Gathering all parents at one time was a new experience for teachers and parents. Feelings of apprehension, nervousness and insecurity came to the surface as teachers prepared to lead a parent-teacher team meeting. The time commitment initially posed a challenge for some teachers. They felt it had the potential to be a lot of additional work for them. Their feelings changed as they progressed through the experience and realized that parents welcomed the information and appreciated the time and effort they had invested in preparing the material and offering the training activities. Teacher #4 expressed her feelings when she affirmed, "I was nervous and a little apprehensive, but as the meeting went along I felt a lot better and I appreciated the parents questions and interest" (Teacher interview, October 14). About her first meeting, teacher #8 maintained, "I was a little hesitant [about] showing the graphs I made of the HFW and math scores. I was afraid that I would lose the parents and get them upset or they would be mad at me, but it was actually the opposite" (Teacher reflection, August 25). Teacher #4 had concerns regarding additional time commitments when she indicated, "It is a lot of work... a lot of coordinating with the parent liaison... with that said, I think

it is paying off. I think it pushed me professionally to a place I wasn't always comfortable—meeting with parents” (Teacher reflection, December 16).

The increased communication and interaction between parents and teachers offered through the intervention caused teachers to perceive parents in a different way. Teachers had new experiences on which to make judgments and new perceptions arose from these encounters with parents in their classroom. For example, teacher #9 pointed out the following, “I am very fortunate to have a group of parents who truly want to help their children and they do all they can to make sure they succeed” (Teacher reflection, December 15). Teacher #1 reflected on her new found relationship with parents when she declared, “I have better communication with my parents than any other year that I have taught...look at my student scores and look at where they ended up. Parents did it” (Teacher interview, November 4). Additionally, teacher #3 offered this observation of her parents, “This year I have parents coming in...they are asking questions about homework...the projects we are doing, the vocabulary...it is fascinating to see how much more interested they are” (Teacher interview, November 9).

Teachers provided coaching, motivation and feedback to parents regularly. Beyond the scheduled meetings, teachers made themselves available to maintain the momentum they had built in parent communication. During meetings teachers articulated to parents that they were open to answering questions and clarifying issues at anytime. Parents merely had to ask before or after class, write a note or make a phone call. As parents got involved with academic activities at home,

many questions arose and parents felt teachers kept their word and were available and helpful to them. In one interview, parent #2 noted the teacher went above and beyond her required duties when she noted, “I had never seen that teachers would take time like this...she calls me...I come and she tells what I have to do...she wants me to learn too so I can help my child, I like that” (Parent Interview, November 10). Teacher #1 indicated she was able to form a meaningful relationship with parents when she affirmed, “I think it is the relationship that you have allowed yourself to form with parents, they respond to me...it is amazing what you might get if you just ask” (Teacher interview, November 1). Parent #17 described his relationship and communication with the teacher when he acknowledged, “I travel a lot and I am in college...the teacher sends me an email letting me know my child seems sad, that helps me...I think our communication has contributed to my kid’s academics...it encourages me” (Parent interview, November 18).

APTT makes life easier for teachers when parents shared in the responsibility of fostering student achievement. Initially when they were asked to participate in the intervention, teachers had concerns and reservations regarding the time commitment required to implement the APTT model. Nevertheless, teachers came to see the time spent preparing for meetings paid dividends. After their first team meeting and having the experience with positive parent involvement and parents’ immediate interest in the process, teachers appreciated the positive outcomes associated with participation in APTT and a variety of

teacher comments supported this theme-related component. Teacher #5 said of her experience, “If I didn’t have the foundation of APTT it would be a whole lot harder to get parents involved. This program just changes their point of view of what parent responsibility is” (Teacher interview, November 15). It was clear, teacher #3 believed the meetings enhanced her teaching experience when she acknowledged, “The parents need new ways to assist their children. Their child (sic) has already learned more words...they are more interested and it keeps me on my toes. It is great for both of us” (Teacher interview, November 9). Additionally, teacher #9 commented, “The biggest impact on my practice as a teacher is becoming aware that some parents need assistance with how to help their children at home. Our meeting made parents happy to see that all our work is paying off” (Teacher reflection, December 6). Similarly, when teacher #3 reflected on the last meeting she had with parents, she noted, “I see a higher buy-in from parents. These meetings have helped me a lot. I don’t feel like the whole load falls on me...parents have to share the load with me to teach and educate their children” (Teacher reflection, November 9).

Implementation of APTT provided teachers with the opportunity to gain new perspectives about parents and the process of parental involvement in education. Teachers realized that parents wanted the best possible academic outcomes for their children but they needed guidance, coaching, and explicit information to take action steps at home. The positive interaction with parents in their class provided by parent-teacher team meetings and the appreciation parents

showed them, assisted teachers in developing confidence and a new, deeper understanding and appreciation for the families they serve. The APTT experience allowed teachers to recognize that the time and effort they invested benefited all involved, especially the students.

Student engagement, confidence and learning performance. Assertion 4 stipulates—*Many students met or exceeded academic expectations with confidence when parents and teachers created collaborative structures of support.*

When teachers and parents created a collaborative course of action that was supported both at school and at home, the results in student growth were positive and motivating. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme leading to this assertion: (a) parents individually helped and encouraged students with homework and studying to meet academic goals; (b) when students and parents learned how to go beyond homework, academic improvement was evident earlier in the year; (c) students were aware of their academic goals and engaged in monitoring their progress; (d) increased student practice at home, motivation and confidence led to mastery of academic goals.

Having the specific information and step-by-step guidance provided by the teacher during team meetings provided clarity to families on specific activities to practice at home. Parent #18 explained that having new, more in-depth information helped her assist her child when she described, “Last year was very difficult for me as a parent...I didn’t have all the information, now it is not difficult...I know how to work with words and reading and how to make her feel

comfortable” (Parent interview, November 19). The specific nature of the information provided to parents with target objectives to practice at home made it possible to be successful. Parent #6 reported feeling happy when she and her son met the goal set during the team meeting when she indicated, “Our goal was to know 50 words...he only knew four...but we now know 75. We know more than the goal...even I am surprised...we both did a good job” (Parent interview, November 1). Student #3 described how her sister got involved in practicing reading and HFW with her when she said, “My sister helps me with my reading... she helps me with all the words I don’t know. She tells me them and then I repeat it...I got three 100s and two 80s” (Student interview, November 22).

Most of the parents who participated in the study were under the assumption that making their children do homework was the only requirement teachers had of them. They were not aware of any additional responsibilities they needed to fulfill to help their child be successful in school. Prior to their participation in this project, parents had not experienced an in-depth explanation of expected grade level learning objectives. They had not previously been provided with assessment data showing where their child fell in comparison with their classmates. Further, they had never been coached on specific activities to conduct with their children that were aligned to academic goals. All 18 parents who were interviewed were happy and appreciative for the training, assessment information and materials they received during the parent-teacher team meetings. They were enthusiastic about having an academic goal that went beyond

homework so they could be active in helping their children meet grade level standards and go higher if possible. When students and parents learned how to go beyond homework, academic improvement was evident earlier in the year. Teacher #4 shared her perspectives about the academic benefits students experienced earlier in the year when parents worked with their children when she said, “The jump we are seeing now is what I would see like third quarter...all of a sudden everything is clicking. The parts of reading come together earlier” (Teacher interview, November 1). Teacher #9 reflected on the atypical early improvement of her students and she attributed this early improvement to parents’ dedication to meeting the academic goals when she affirmed,

My parents have been working very hard with their children at home. I had 90% of my class improve on their HFW and 85% of students met the goal of reading 100 words. I even have two students mastering all 225 words and it is only December. The parents’ work also shows with the results from the oral reading test. There are five students in my class who are scoring above grade level and out of the whole class I have zero students being pulled out for intervention classes (Teacher reflection, December 16).

Parent #10 acknowledged her new found responsibility in the education of her child when she noted, “This has worked for me...if the teacher hadn’t told me ‘your son needs to know these words by this date’... as a parent I thought school is where they learn not at home, but now I know I have an obligation too” (Parent interview, October 26). Parent #7 expressed her new sense of responsibility when she proclaimed, “I have to help my son more now, be more dedicated to his goals...if he has to learn ten words every week then he will learn ten words every

week. That is my responsibility to him” (Parent interview, November 16). Parent #13 rearranged her daughter’s time structure at home to ensure she does both homework and practices reading fluency when she declared, “She does both the homework and then she also has time to do the word timer, the activities the teacher set for us and gave us” (Parent interview, November 4).

The collaborative, academic agreement between parents and teachers exhibited in the 60-day academic goals for each student and the increased practice of skills at home have motivated students to take ownership and pride in their academic growth and achievement. Students demonstrated increased awareness of their scores and how those were related to academic goals and to monitoring of their progress toward the goal. Students want to perform better each time the teacher provides formal or informal skill monitoring assessment. For students and parents, the 60-day academic goals have provided motivation and a sense of challenge and purpose. Teacher #1 noticed students becoming more engaged in learning and aware of their progress when she explained, “When I progress monitored (sic) students for oral reading fluency many of them wanted to know their score immediately...when I give them the score they know if it is a good score or they will compare it to the previous score” (Teacher interview, November 1). Student #12 recognized her achievement when she worked with her mother as she confirmed, “My mom says the words and she says to say the words and I practice and practice to get 100% and I do get 100%” (Student interview, November 22). Parent #6 noticed her child’s competitive edge and confidence in

his learning when she explained that her child likes to go to school and likes to be tested so he knows how many words he has achieved when she acknowledged, “He likes going to school and he tells the teacher that he knows all the words, he wants her to give him a test and another test so he knows how many he gets right” (Parent interview, November 1). Student #10 shared thoughts about a conversation between his mom and his teacher and the positive influence of this conversation when he declared, “My teacher told my mom that I knew all 120 words. My mom said good job and she gave me a gift” (Student interview, November 22).

The 60-day academic goals have motivated parents to invest additional time to practice those skills at home with their children. Moreover, having this challenge has intensified the quality of time parents are spending with their children on academics. The work teachers are doing in the classroom is being supported at home. This alignment in academic effort, empowered students to take ownership of their learning and achievement because it gave them acknowledged success at home and school. Students were often taking the lead in making time for practice. They asked their parents, their siblings and sometimes other family members to assist them while they practiced reading, writing and mathematics. Increased student motivation and confidence lead to mastery of academic goals. Parent #4 made clear her daughter’s motivation when she offered these remarks,

I do notice a lot of difference in my child. She gets into it...every single night she is 'mommy we have to study.' She is the main one; she tells me or daddy to help her do it. She had a goal of HFW and she surpassed her goal so now we set a higher goal for her for December. So it has helped her a lot because she loves to read and this is just fun for the kids. And it's something they actually want to do (Parent interview, November 4).

Parent #1 noticed that her daughter enjoyed the challenge of having academic goals, she looked forward to practicing, "My daughter is more dedicated now because of the activities we got. She thinks they are a game 'let's go play and learn' she says" (Parent interview, November 2). Teacher #6 observed increased confidence in her students when using resources in the classroom when she affirmed, "Two of my girls now know how to use their resources so they are capable of finishing their assignments...I went through with the parents on how to use them and they are practicing...they are feeling more confident" (Teacher interview, November 24). Teacher #3 commented on the increased excitement about school shown by the students who were receiving parent support at home when she indicated, "Now the students that have a lot of parental support are so proud because they show me their notebooks and they say 'these are the words I am doing at home'...they are taking this leadership role into the classroom" (Teacher interview, November 9).

The support and encouragement provided to students by parents and teachers through aligned goals and learning objectives resulted in increased student motivation and confidence about their ability to perform. The experience with APTT and the new responsibilities given to parents that extended beyond

homework gave them a clearer understanding of grade level learning objectives and the improvements their children had to demonstrate. This newly acquired knowledge and the challenge of academic goals motivated parents to increase the quantity and quality of time they dedicated to practice of skills and the support they provided their children with schoolwork. With parent-teacher collaboration and with academic support structures in place, many students met or exceeded the academic goals and demonstrated confidence, as well.

By comparison, typically those students who did not show improvement consistent with their peers did not receive the desired parental support in their homes. For example, some parents worked during the after school hours and were not able to implement the requested parental ‘teaching’ time. Teacher reports indicate this situation occurred in about 12% of the families in each classroom. In other cases, parents were slow to implement practice of these academic skills because they felt incapable due to their own illiteracy.

Academic Parent Teacher Teams as model for parent involvement in education. Assertion 5—*APTT provided the additional time and structure teachers needed to share expectations, data, activities and materials that parents needed to be engaged in the student learning process.* Having a structure in place that allows parents and teachers to regularly interact and collaborate is the beginning of establishing a productive partnership that allows for shared responsibility of student learning. The traditional model of parent-teacher conferences twice a year for 15 to 20 minutes restricts the roles parents and

teachers are able to take in developing fruitful partnerships. The following theme-related components were found to substantiate the theme leading to this assertion: (a) parent-teacher communication was more regular and it was focused on academics; (b) sharing group and individual data and communicating with all parents at once created a community with one vision; (c) parents and teachers preferred the APTT model over traditional conferences; and (d) setting academic goals promoted motivation and engagement.

Among the most salient theme-components in this action research study was increased parent-teacher communication. The increase in communication was initiated by the classroom teacher during the first classroom team meeting. Teachers announced several times to all parents that they were open and available to answer any questions or concerns that arose in the course of the school year. The explicit academic content of the team meeting that included sharing data, setting 60-day academic goals and practicing skills set the tone for all other conversations between parents and teachers. As parents began working with their children at home, questions arose. These questions led to more regular communication that was focused on students' academic work. Teacher #5 felt strongly about her improved communication with parents when she affirmed, "I have enjoyed the communication that I have with my parents...it would not be as open if it wasn't for the program...that is the biggest thing the communication" (Teacher interview, November 15). Parent #8 explained the effect the program had on her as a parent, being motivated and appreciating the

communication when she declared, “The program has worked for me. I like it because it provides me with motivation, but it also motivates the children and there is a lot more communication between parents, parents and teachers and the children” (Parent interview, November 30). Teacher #2 attested to the academic nature of her conversations with parents when she explained, “Parents now know what questions to ask and I think that’s the key...they are able to actually throw in academic language that they wouldn’t have known otherwise” (Teacher interview, November 7).

Inviting all classroom parents to attend a parent-teacher team meeting afforded teachers and parents several opportunities that individual meetings could not accomplish. Consistency and uniformity in the delivery of information was a clear advantage. As parents heard the information they asked questions that provided other parents with a better understanding of the material being discussed. Often parents had similar uncertainties. Because some parents were more amenable to asking questions, the answers teachers provided to them also provided meaningful information to parents who did not ask for additional clarification.

Sharing whole-class and individual student assessment data, while maintaining the anonymity of individual students, helped parents better understand grade-level expectations for achievement. Student progress reports and test scores were traditionally shared individually so parents were often unaware of how other students were performing. Moreover, they were not aware

of expected grade-level performance standards. Openly sharing classroom data gave parents a context for setting challenging yet realistic target goals. Graphs provided a visual that reinforced their child's performance relative to the class and to the grade-level expectations. Having group meetings also provided an opportunity for parents to assist other parents and encouraged the common vision that all children deserved to achieve at high levels. Teacher #8 had some insights regarding whole group meetings when she declared, "I think parents, especially when given direction, activities and even a little competition, when (sic) they see where the other kids are compared to their own, are motivated to help their child academically" (Teacher reflection, November 1). Teacher #4 confirmed the advantage of sharing consistent information with all parents in her class when she acknowledged, "This is the first time I have ever had all the parents come to something...they all got the same information the same ideas. It helped me to know that everyone was receiving this information" (Teacher interview, November 1). Parent #15 had the following reaction to the scores shared by the teacher, "As soon as I got home I told my child we have a challenge to meet...you are not going to fall behind. We are both going to work hard so you can be as high as other kids in the class or higher" (Parent interview, October 25). Teacher #1 felt that parents needed to see the data to have a context for their effort and she explained her experience this way, "Parents have gotten all the initial data. A lot of parents are shocked at how high the norm is and either shocked that their child

is so far from the goal or pleasantly surprised that their child is near the goal” (Teacher interview, November 1).

Before implementation of APTT most teachers had feelings of skepticism about this approach to parent involvement. They were already overwhelmed with their work and they doubted parents would attend. Additionally, they felt nervous and apprehensive about sharing whole-class data for fear of parents’ potential adverse reactions. They also felt unprepared for the experience of facing all parents at one time. After experiencing the first parent-teacher team meeting, teachers attained a new sense of optimism; it gave them a new perspective on the families in their class. The first team meeting was held in early September, only a few weeks after the start of the new school year. Getting an early start on sharing and reviewing initial benchmark data and setting academic goals based on that data allowed teachers to emphasize to all parents that goals are attainable and that all students can be successful. Teachers also clearly articulated the expected learning objectives for the first grade, they told parents that at the end of first grade students are expected to become fluent readers, to understand what they read and they need to know their addition and subtraction facts. The purpose of APTT was to give parents awareness, information and support they needed to take action steps toward helping their children attain or exceed grade-level achievement standards. Teachers also emphasized the importance of becoming a community of learners and helping every student and family in the class feel

successful and supported. Teacher #2 expressed her approval of APTT when she stated,

I think this program is the much-needed update that teachers needed to be able to disseminate information to parents in an organized, literal, productive way. It's fun. It's challenging and exciting. It's all those things because when [it is] done correctly, parents are getting the very most up-to-date data on their students, presented in a fun way along with actual activities they can do at home to keep them engaged and learning (Teacher reflection, December 17).

Teacher #1 attributed to APTT the drastic change in how her students monitor their own growth when she mentioned, "My students are making graphs to chart their ORF scores...they like to see their graphs going up...my students are not only learning to set goals but they are beginning to understand what it takes to achieve their goals" (Teacher reflection, November 1). Teacher #5 is a parent and a teacher in APTT, she voiced her strong support of this model when she indicated, "I am involved as a parent and as a teacher...It's allowed me to put some of the responsibility on the parents and they have been open to getting those responsibilities...we are working together to build those successes" (Teacher Interview, November 15). Parent #3 expressed her appreciation and support for the program when she asserted, "I am satisfied with APTT but I would like all classrooms to have it...I know it is more work for the teacher...in my opinion if parents and teachers work together it is easier for the child to grow" (Parent interview, November 23).

Setting 60-day academic goals for students was a key element in the implementation of APTT. Sharing of data with embedded standards for

achievement and knowledge of grade-level learning objectives allowed development of goals for students. Based on the information shared during meetings, parents and teachers set realistic, attainable, and measurable goals for students. Working toward common academic goals exemplified the joint effort and the common ground parents and teachers shared. Further, it served as a source for continued communication and collaboration between home and school. Goals for parents and teachers represented a concerted, relevant, tangible objective. Moreover, creation of goals aided in setting parameters that made clear what each partner had to contribute to move the student forward. Parent #1 explained the difference it made for her when the teacher provided graphs and student progress information when she noted, “Information is more explicit now, more detailed and she teaches us using graphs so we know the level of our child. So we know in what area to help [him] and what they (sic) need” (Parent interview, November 7). Teacher #7 used goals differently with different parents. She discovered different goals worked for different families and she stated, “For parents that struggle, the short term goals are best and for the students that are exceeding, longer term goals seemed to work better. Goals allow the parents to sit back and actually be a part of their child’s education” (Teacher interview, December 18). Parent #3 recognized that goals were important both for parents and students when she commented, “The important thing is that my child knows she has to meet a goal...we practice and practice to be able to meet it. The responsibility is hers and mine” (Parent interview, November 23).

Collaboratively setting student academic goals with teachers afforded parents an opportunity to become a significant member of the teaching team. Goals made the parents' role in student learning clear, actionable and measurable. Additionally, goals enabled a link between parents and teachers and a pathway for continued communication based on specific student needs.

CHAPTER 5

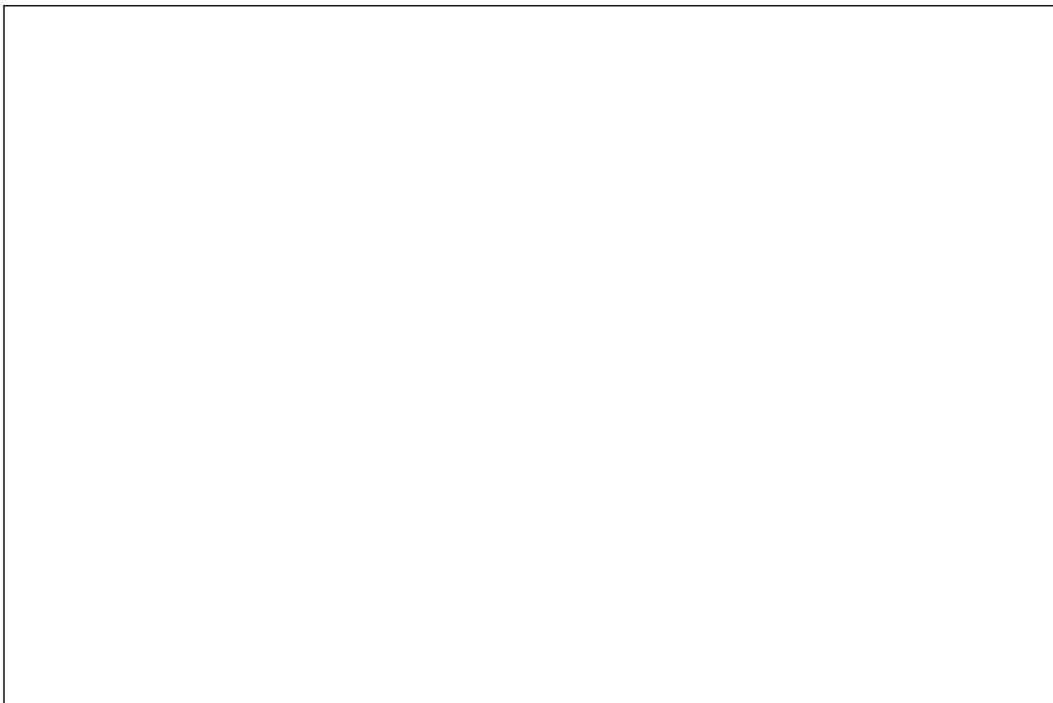
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this action research study was to examine the APTT model as an alternative to parent-teacher conferences. APTT is a framework for parent-teacher interaction and collaboration that includes, increased time for face-to-face communication, sharing whole group and individual student data, setting academic goals for students, teacher coaching of parents, distribution of practice materials and sharing clear grade-level learning expectations. In this section, information about lessons learned, teacher efficacy and leadership, student outcomes, implications for practice, implications for future research and a conclusion are presented.

Lessons learned

To better understand the complex interactions between parents and teachers that resulted in increased student performance, *effectual congruence* is

offered as an explanation. See Figure 3. Effectual congruence consists of two parts. First, congruence suggests there is understanding and agreement between parents and teachers about what is to be learned and the importance of that learning. Second, effectual means parents and teachers work together to produce or effect some change. During this action research study many parents, students and teachers actively share knowledge, set high standards for student learning and explicitly define each person's role and responsibility in the educational process. The interconnection of effort and purpose serve as the foundation for effectual congruence and APTT is the conduit for its application. Six dynamic mechanisms are inextricably bound together in the development and implementation of effectual congruence: (a) parent-teacher communication; (b) data sharing; (c) goal setting; (d) teacher coaching of parents; (e) distribution of practice materials; and (e) parent engagement.



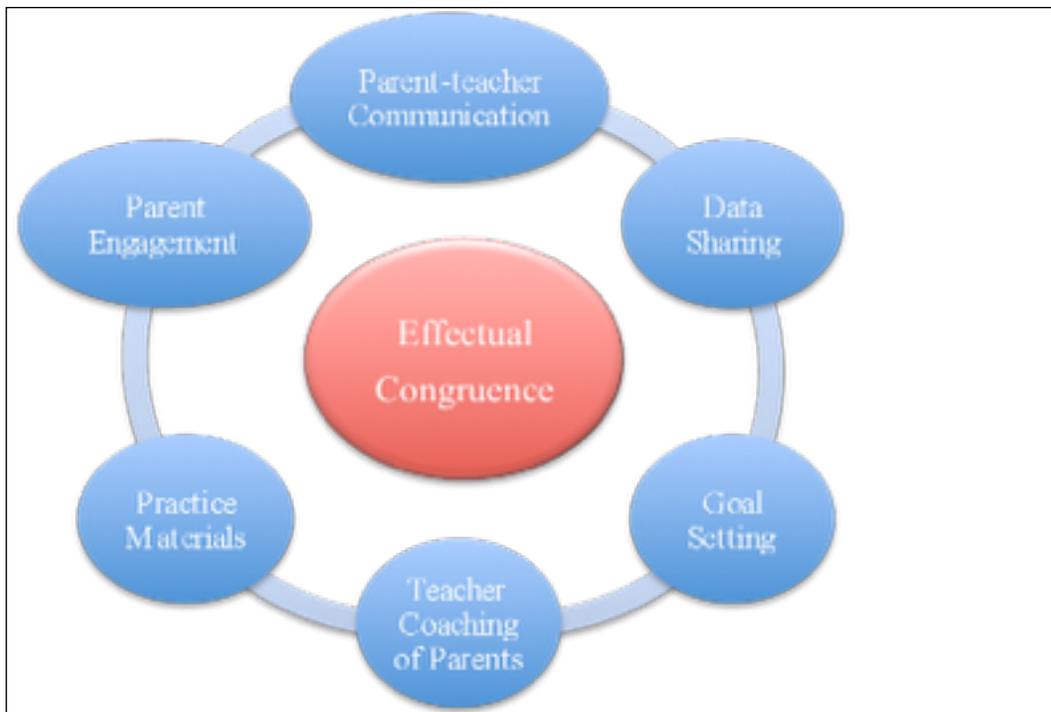


Figure 3. Effectual congruence is a process that increases student academic performance. It is facilitated when all six components are supported through parent-teacher collaboration. The interconnection of effort and purpose put forth by parents and teachers serve as the foundation for effectual congruence. The complementary circles (starting with parent-teacher communication and ending with parent engagement) that enclose it denote the order in which components consequentially support *effectual congruence*.

Parent-teacher communication. Parent-teacher communication plays a crucial role in the development of effectual congruence (EC). The APTT program provides the mechanism for teachers to communicate more frequently and more effectively with parents. Teachers invite parents to the first parent-teacher team meeting by sending home an invitation on school letterhead that outlines the purpose and elements to be addressed in the meeting. The personal invitation by the teacher is followed by a phone call made by the school parent liaison to ensure parents receive and read the invitation and to emphasize the academic nature of

the meeting and the importance of their attendance. The teachers' invitation to parents to begin a collaborative home-classroom partnership plays a key role in increasing parent-teacher communication. Parents perceive teacher invitations to become involved as a sign of deep caring and concern for their children's success.

Teachers also communicate to parents the important role they play in facilitating and accelerating learning in their children and establish expectations for parental involvement when they ask parents to assist their children in learning the high frequency words and practicing oral reading fluency. For most parents, this is the first time they have been asked to become involved in assisting students' learning beyond monitoring the completion of homework.

The team meetings and individualized conferences are utilized by teachers to encourage parents to ask questions at times beyond these scheduled team meetings. For example, teachers make themselves available before and after school on non-duty days and also make clear that parents can make appointments any time for additional assistance or clarification. The results indicate teachers' open door policy for communication gives parents more confidence and opportunities to bring up questions and clarify any uncertainties they have related to practice of skills, use of materials, and teacher academic expectations.

Parents appreciate having the information and knowing what they can do to assist in the learning process. For many parents this is the first time they are informed, in a way that is clear to them, about the academic performance that is expected of their children, and what is expected of them in aiding their children's

learning. Further, the introduction of academic communication at the initial parent-teacher team meeting opens many opportunities for teachers and parents to discuss matters related to their child's performance later during the semester. As a result, increases in frequency and length of communication occur between parents and teachers. Moreover, many of these communicative interactions focus on academic matters rather than the usual, obligatory brief greetings and inconsequential exchanges.

Taken together, these accomplishments in parent-teacher communication along with the quantitative results demonstrating increases in student achievement on HFW and ORF assessment scores provide clear, positive answers to the second and third questions of this action research study. Is there a change in parents' perception of their role in their child's academic achievement when teachers explicitly request assistance with students' goals and schoolwork? And, does increased parent-teacher interaction and communication have an effect on student achievement?

Data sharing. A second crucial and defining element that supports EC is sharing current, relevant student performance data. Teachers share whole class student performance data with parents during the parent-teacher team meetings and personal student performance data during the individual 30-minute conferences. Bar graphs are used as a visual aide for parents to better understand whole classroom benchmark scores, grade level performance standards and current individual student performance within the class.

The importance of teachers sharing data to clearly demonstrate academic expectations is highlighted in every parent interview. Participants describe their experience as ‘eye opening’ because they can compare their children’s performance with others, and this becomes an impetus for their involvement. All parents express the high expectations they hold for their children, ‘they want their children to be professionals and not have the life of hard work as they have experienced due to lack of formal higher education.’ All parents describe their heartfelt desire to see their child at the top of the class graph, performing on par or better than their classroom counterparts. These findings attest to parents’ high value for educational success. Moreover, these results are consistent with previously established research findings which suggested that all parents, regardless of their social class, value education (Lareau, 1987). Nevertheless, in her findings, Lareau concluded that there is a distinction between parents; parents with higher levels of educational experience value and expect higher levels of educational attainment.

Demystifying student performance data by providing information to parents is an essential component in facilitating EC. Several parents reported not being previously aware of an achievement gap between their child’s performance and those of other students in the class.

Goal setting. Setting 60-day student academic goals established actionable steps for parents. Their involvement in reaching the goals is an essential ingredient in EC. Through goal setting, parents and teachers jointly

create an action plan to foster student academic growth. Setting 60-day goals for each parent-student team solidifies teacher expectations and marks the start of the home-classroom shared responsibility in student learning. The goals provided targets for levels of attainment that encourage effort by students and parents. Importantly, performance data results for HFW and ORF indicate the majority of students achieve the goals and in many instances exceed them. In summary, the 60-day academic goals give parents new awareness and provide motivation to support their children's learning at home.

Teacher coaching of parents. Parents' capacity to teach and provide practice at home is a fundamental attribute of EC. To complement the teacher actions of sharing data and assisting parents in goal setting, providing parents with specific activities, strategies and materials for practice at home is essential. Following teacher coaching, parents had the opportunity to practice the learning activities and using the materials with other parents in the class. Practice gives parents a sense of confidence in their ability to teach. These contentions are corroborated by parents when they report that the coaching they receive from the teachers is essential to their ability to reproduce it at home with their children. In some cases they describe going beyond the activities learned in class and improvising with their own methods to increase the learning effect.

With respect to outcomes, teachers regularly notice evidence that parents are teaching at home when they hear students bragging to other students and when they observe students being more comfortable using learning resources at school

and making connections faster during classroom instruction. The continuity that is created by the home-school alignment on practice of skills had a positive effect of increased learning and it plays a key function in EC. This finding also provides new insight into the importance of the type of resources that schools must make available to parents in communities that serve low-SES, minority parents with limited educational attainment.

Distribution of practice materials. Having materials to take home following team meetings is essential to the success of the program. Materials give parents a sense of continuity after the meeting and a ‘no excuses perspective’ about assisting their children to attain the academic goal. During interviews, many parents express their appreciation for the materials and report using them on a daily basis. Additionally, some teachers remark that a few parents ask for the next level of the materials because their children have already mastered the previous set.

Parent engagement. The last and most consequential element in the demonstration of EC is parent involvement. APTT provides a precise path for parents to engage directly in the process of fostering student learning that is consistent with teacher expectations and student needs. After teachers provide parents with student data, goals with timelines, and training and practice materials, most parents seize the opportunity and become fully involved participants in their children’s academic improvement process.

Moreover, parents are able to gain new perspective on their role in education and change home routines to incorporate additional time for study and practice beyond homework. Further, many parents recruit other family members such as siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents to share in the responsibility of meeting the academic goals. In two cases parents who are neighbors, collaborated to create joint study time for their children to optimize practice and share strategies. Several parents and children report that mothers and fathers share equally in the responsibility of providing practice; sometimes the subject matter (mathematics or reading) dictates who works with the children. Parents offer commonly occurring statements during interviews that articulate their commitment to being involved and their determination to do their part in facilitating academic success for their children. These findings are compatible with quantitative student assessment data results for HFW and ORF.

Together, the achievements in parent involvement provide ample and explicit answers to the first question posed in this action research study. Is there an effect on parent involvement in school when parents participate in APTT?

Teacher Efficacy and Leadership

Implementation of APTT signifies a drastic departure from the traditional teacher role. Teachers make a leap from the traditional and familiar parent-teacher conference model to a vastly unfamiliar role of academic team leader of classroom families. Teacher beliefs in their own teaching effectiveness (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Hoover-Dempsey, 1987) are

significant factors in the level and intensity of parent engagement produced. This is important considering the APTT model requires teachers to take a strong leadership role.

Teacher reflections following the first parent-teacher team meeting reveal that before meeting with parents for the first time, five of nine teacher participants feel hesitant, nervous, apprehensive, skeptical and doubtful about potential benefits arising from the APTT intervention. In addition, teachers disclose emotions that range from feeling personally unprepared and unorganized for the parent-teacher team meeting to expressing nervousness and fear about disclosing whole-group and individual student performance data, and anticipating negative reactions from parents with low performing students. Teachers' beliefs and perceptions about parents are reflected in the emotions they have going into the first meeting but in all five cases those feelings are transformed after the meeting takes place. By comparison, four of nine teachers state their feelings before and after the meeting as being exhilarated, excited, impressed, fully prepared, hopeful, determined, and so forth.

Teachers with high efficacy and leadership skills perceive implementation of APTT as a natural and necessary extension of their teaching role, and they follow the model with fidelity. These teachers perceive parents as genuine partners and have no doubt that with the correct training, information and materials most parents can 'step up to the plate' to academically advance their children. Student assessment results for HFW and ORF demonstrate that students

in these classrooms had fast and substantial academic growth. These findings also have additional support during parent interviews, when parents express their perceptions of ‘good teachers’ as being, highly professional, highly demanding, communicative, motivational, supporting of parents and having high expectations for student achievement. Parents are appreciative of these teacher qualities. The most efficacious teachers consistently follow up with parents who are not able to attend the parent-teacher team meetings by scheduling individual meetings and ensuring these parents have the information they need to participate. They apply a ‘no excuse’ policy for all parents.

Teacher reflections and interviews also show that implementation of the APTT model and teachers’ efficacy and ability to provide leadership to the parents in their class is a process. Teachers notice that each time they hold a team meeting, the experience becomes an opportunity for reflection, evaluation and improvement. All participants indicate they have improved their leadership skills.

Student Outcomes

Students’ increased achievement for HFW and ORF often exceeded parents and teachers’ original expectations. Moreover, these gains in achievement were consistent with parent survey results, which reflected their level of approval of the APTT model and their own perceived role in increasing student learning.

Student assessment data and teacher, parent and student interviews highlight several elements related to student outcomes: significant quick growth earlier in the year for HFW and ORF, increased student confidence, student self-

monitoring of academic growth, increased skill practice at home, and increased parent-child time dedicated to practice and learning. These findings are aligned with and support Mosteller and Moynihan's (1972) analysis of the Coleman Report (Coleman et al., 1966) which found that approximately one-half to two-thirds of the student achievement variance is accounted for by home variables rather than school variables. Given these results, it is clear teacher implementation of APTT is the home-classroom connection that makes possible parent involvement. Teacher implementation of APTT eliminates many of the barriers commonly associated with lack of parent involvement.

Teacher interviews also bring attention to one additional positive effect of high levels of parent involvement. The number of students leaving class for academic intervention decreased dramatically. Higher student performance because of parent involvement gives teachers the opportunity to focus additional attention on fewer students with legitimate learning needs. Subsequently, when fewer students leave class for academic intervention, fewer students miss valuable classroom instruction. One of the participating teachers reports on her reflection a decrease in out-of-class student interventions from six to none.

Taken together, these findings present explicit and encouraging answers to the first and third questions posed in this action research study. Is there an effect on parent involvement in school when parents participate in APTT? And, does increased parent-teacher interaction and communication have an effect on student achievement?

Implications for Practice

Through the implementation of APTT I have learned that most parents genuinely want to help their children succeed. In order to help parents successfully work with their children at home I need to give them the tools and information necessary to empower them and hold them accountable for their child's learning. I have learned that individually we are not nearly as successful as we are when we work as a team (Teacher #1, November 1).

Teacher implementation of the APTT model for parent involvement produces multiple benefits that far exceed the expectations of parents and teachers. Evidence of its influence resonates in the quantitative and qualitative results. All students, especially minority students in urban schools, benefit greatly when parents and teachers intentionally work collaboratively to create structures of support. The APTT model offers a simple, yet comprehensive framework for parent-teacher communication and parent involvement that delineates participants' roles and helps eliminate barriers commonly associated with low parent involvement in schools. This student-centered, alternative model for parent involvement represents a paradigm shift. It is designed to involve all parents and improve the achievement of all children in the classroom. APTT replaces school-centered, non-academic parent activities with academically aligned home-classroom goals.

A new system that builds on a unified, home-school interconnected parent involvement approach must be at the heart of school reform initiatives. Teachers serving urban minority populations realize they cannot do it alone. Nevertheless, most efforts to involve parents in school fall painfully short of meeting the needs of parents, especially those with limited educational attainment. As we observed in APTT, personalized, structured interactions at the classroom level are necessary to deliver the proper information and training parents need to be meaningfully involved. Teachers' skills and responsibilities must be expanded to incorporate the ability to capitalize on parent aspirations and to turn parent aspirations into actionable steps that support student academic attainment. Parent-teacher communication and collaboration cannot be left to chance and traditional conferences are not designed to produce effective home-classroom connections. Parent and teacher participants discovered the strength and results that can be attained through collaborative action. The APTT model allows parents and teachers to concertedly channel their influence to produce measurable results in student learning. Moreover, trust between parents and teachers is strengthened when all demonstrate sincere commitments to remove barriers that stand between children and academic success.

The nine teachers in this action research study are utilizing parent involvement as a powerful instructional strategy. This new interpretation of parent involvement as an instructional strategy is profound and practical because it provides a path for continuous improvement and it places parents who are the

main stakeholders, in the middle of the educational process. Consistent with all powerful instructional strategies, its effectiveness requires ongoing reflection, evaluation and refinement. In addition, the effective use of student data as a catalyst for concerted action leads to academic gains being achieved by students.

To ensure high quality implementation of APTT, teacher training, time for planning, preparedness and administrative support is required. To be properly prepared for APTT meetings, a teacher must collect and analyze group and individual student assessment data for presentation to parents. She must determine and express to parents the key learning skills and performance expectations for her grade level so that academic goals can be set during the meeting. She must prepare learning activities and be ready to demonstrate them during the meeting, and she must prepare the material that parents take home for practice. Consistent with other important instructional strategies, teachers need expert training and support to master these abilities. The potential for application across entire schools and district is very high given the benefits that have been demonstrated. APTT, which serves as a conduit that fosters effectual congruence is a realistic alternative to traditional parent-teacher conferences. Reconfiguring how parents and teachers find solutions together for continuous student improvement establishes a new vision and culture for learning and achievement.

A final implication for practice that requires careful consideration is the current use and definition of parent involvement by educators. Parent involvement is commonly considered to be the actions parents take in response to broad

invitations made by schools. In other words, schools consider parents to be involved when they participate in parent-teacher conferences, school committees, volunteering opportunities, decision-making, especially when they attend social events at the school. Unfortunately, these activities do not focus on academic matters. Good parent involvement is not commonly associated with the amount of time and effort parents dedicate to helping their children with schoolwork and school preparedness. Well recognized, parent involvement programs have evolved in response to these commonly held assumptions and beliefs about ideal parent behavior. Results from this study suggest a potentially effective new approach to parent involvement in education. The efforts the school makes to create parent involvement need to be more precisely directed. Results from implementation of the APTT model suggest parent involvement efforts should be student-centered and be applied first at the classroom level to ensure parents and teachers become confident and effective partners and that effectual congruence is developed to support student learning.

Implications for Research

This action research study on implementation of the Academic Parent-Teacher Team model suggests that teachers can take specific action at the classroom level to meaningfully and effectively involve parents in teaching and learning processes. Teachers can incorporate parent involvement as an important component of effective instruction. This research study put to the test practical approaches to eliminate common barriers parents face in becoming involved with

student learning. The results also validate previous research results, which showed that parents, regardless of social class, race or academic attainment, value the academic success of their children. Committed classroom teachers and a viable framework for parent involvement in education are pivotal in the propagation of social and cultural capital.

The process of effectual congruence exemplifies the need for a collaborative structure of support that gives families access to quality parent-teacher communication, clear and useful data, strategies to promote learning, training and resources. To further reproduce processes that lead to effectual congruence, policy makers and educators must engage in actions that develop teacher and administrator capacity to more effectively provide leadership to the families they serve. Moreover, these processes must be subjected to scrutiny to determine the effectiveness of the procedures. Professional development must be provided to pre- and- in-service teachers and administrators to increase understanding of parent involvement as an instructional strategy and the potential for aligning home-school systems. Further research is warranted to understand teacher leadership characteristics and teacher actions that optimize parent-teacher partnerships. Future research might address: What variations of the APTT model might work to better serve the needs of middle and high school families, teachers and students? What content in professional development and educational courses may have the effect of producing beneficial parent involvement practices in the field? This action research study of the implementation of the APTT model was a

seminal effort in planting new seeds in an already fertile environment for further parent involvement in education research and practice.

Conclusion

A highly structured parent involvement model such as APTT that is implemented at the classroom level is a powerful instructional strategy that supports increased student performance. Further, the implementation of Academic Parent-Teacher Teams to improve first graders' reading fluency and high frequency word acquisition demonstrates the power of family engagement in student learning. Family engagement in education as demonstrated by this action research study, substantiates that effective parent involvement practices can provide concrete solutions to current educational reform issues. Results from this study suggest that parents and teachers who collaborate can produce fundamental change in student learning and academic performance. This outcome suggests a new window of opportunity is open for improving student performance, especially in schools serving minority students and families. This new paradigm of parent involvement in education can be best understood as a critical component of a comprehensive accountability system designed to maximize all resources available to students.

The learning and intellectual opportunities available to children away from school can have a strong influence on student achievement. This is significant because students attend school for seven hours about 180 days and are at home 185 days a year. The knowledge and capacity that parents have to influence

learning and skill development at home during those non-school days are significant in students' ability to achieve. As effective classroom leaders, teachers are better able to capitalize on parent aspirations when they coach, motivate and inspire families to strive for academic excellence. With successful teacher leadership, parents can strengthen their capacity to provide opportunities for new learning at home and more expertly take their share of the responsibility for academic growth and achievement. The insights and experiences gained in this study lead to an unassailable conclusion: a more successful approach to teaching and learning is one where families and schools are systemically and sustainably interconnected to meet the monumental responsibility of educating children.

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APPENDIX A

PRE-INTERVENTION PARENT SURVEY

(Appendix A)

Parent Involvement in Education Pre-Intervention Survey

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

Thank you for your valuable time. Your answers will be kept confidential. This survey is part of an ASU action research project in parent involvement in education.

Parent name: _____

School: _____ Years at this school : ____ Occupation: _____

Gender: F M Country of origin: _____ Home language: _____

Check the level you completed in school: 6th grade or less 8th grade or less
 Less than 12th grad Graduated from High School Some college
 Graduated from college

Number of children: _____ Grade level(s) Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12

Instructions: Please check your degree of agreement with each item.

My perception of the School Environment		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel welcome when I visit the school.				
2	The school offers me opportunities to participate in educational activities.				
3	I feel the school is a safe place for my child.				
4	I believe most parents are happy with the school.				
5	I think the school makes a good effort of inviting parents to be involved.				

My Communication With the School		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	The school sends me information on parent events that I can attend.				
7	The school events I am invited to attend are connected to my child's academic progress.				
8	I understand all the information the school sends me.				
9	I read all the information the school sends me.				
10	I have regular access to my child's academic performance reports.				
11	Areas in which my child needs to improve are presented to me in a way that I understand them.				

My School Involvement Activities		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12	The school provides me with opportunities to be involved.				
13	The school events I attend motivate me to be more involved with my child.				
14	The school offers me activities that are connected with what my child is learning in class.				
15	The school activities help me learn skills to practice at home with my child.				
16	My child's teacher shows me how to do academic activities to practice at home with my child.				
17	I am provided with the materials I need to do academic activities at home.				

My relationship with teachers		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18	My child's teacher asks me to be involved in my child's school work.				
19	The teacher and I review my child's performance reports together.				
20	My child's teacher and I set academic goals together.				
21	I receive my child's current assessment information from the teacher.				
22	I hold my child's teacher accountable for my child's achievement.				
23	My child's teacher holds me accountable for my child's achievement.				
24	I interact with my child's teacher more than just during parent-teacher conferences.				
25	My child's teacher and I work together as a team.				

My Role in the Education of My Child		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26	I am my child's primary role model.				

27	I am responsible for maintaining communication with the teacher.				
28	I have high academic expectations for my child.				
29	I clearly understand my responsibility for my child's learning.				
30	I am responsible for regularly monitoring my child's academic progress.				
31	I am responsible for having clear rules at home for completion of homework.				
32	It is my job to ensure that my child is prepared for school every day.				
33	I am responsible for helping my child make good decisions.				
34	I am responsible for requiring my child to read every day.				
35	It is my job to find out about resources available in the school that can help my child be successful.				

APPENDIX B

POST-INTERVENTION PARENT SURVEY

(Appendix B)

Parent Involvement in Education Post-Intervention Survey

Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

Thank you for your valuable time. Your answers will be kept confidential.

This survey is part of an ASU action research project in parent involvement in education.

Parent name: _____

School: _____ Years at this school : ____ Occupation: _____

Gender: __ F __ M Country of origin: _____ Home language: _____

Check the level you completed in school: ____ 6th grade or less ____ 8th grade or less
 ____ Less than 12th grad ____ Graduated from High School ____ Some college
 ____ Graduated from college

Number of children: ____ Grade level(s) Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Instructions: Please check your degree of agreement with each item.

My perception of the School Environment		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel welcome when I visit the school.				
2	The school offers me opportunities to participate in educational activities.				
3	I feel the school is a safe place for my child.				
4	I am happy with the school.				
5	I think the school makes a good effort of inviting parents to be involved.				

My Communication With the School		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	The school sends me information on parent events that I can attend.				

7	The school events I am invited to attend are connected to my child's academic progress.				
8	I understand all the information the school sends me.				
9	I read all the information the school sends me.				
10	I have regular access to my child's academic performance reports.				
11	Areas in which my child needs to improve are presented to me in a way that I understand them.				

My School Involvement Activities		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12	The school provides me with opportunities to be involved.				
13	The school events I attend motivate me to be more involved with my child.				
14	The school offers me activities that are connected with what my child is learning in class.				
15	The school activities help me learn skills to practice at home with my child.				
16	My child's teacher shows me how to do academic activities to practice at home with my child.				
17	I am provided with the materials I need to do academic activities at home.				

My relationship with teachers		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18	My child's teacher asks me to be involved in my child's school work.				
19	The teacher and I review my child's performance reports together.				
20	My child's teacher and I set academic goals together.				
21	I receive my child's current assessment information from the teacher.				
22	I hold my child's teacher accountable for my child's achievement.				
23	My child's teacher holds me accountable for my child's achievement.				
24	I interact with my child's teacher more than just during parent-teacher conferences.				
25	My child's teacher and I work together as a team.				

My Role in the Education of My Child		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
26	I am my child's primary role model.				
27	I am responsible for maintaining communication with the teacher.				
28	I have high academic expectations for my child.				
29	I clearly understand my responsibility for my child's learning.				
30	I am responsible for regularly monitoring my child's academic progress.				
31	I am responsible for having clear rules at home for completion of homework.				
32	It is my job to ensure that my child is prepared for school every day.				
33	I am responsible for helping my child make good decisions.				
34	I am responsible for requiring my child to read every day.				
35	It is my job to find out about resources available in the school that can help my child be successful.				

My Experience with the APTT Program		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
36	Being invited by my child's teacher to participate in APTT was important to me.				
37	Having team meetings with other parents in the class was a positive experience for me.				
38	The way the teacher explained my child's academic progress report was clear to me.				
39	Setting academic goals for my child during APTT meetings was helpful to me.				
40	Having the teacher demonstrate to us the activities during the APTT meeting helped me understand what I needed to do at home with my child.				
41	Getting to practice the skills during the meeting gave me a clear understanding of what to do at home with my child.				
42	After participating in APTT, I have a better understanding of how important it is that I am involved in every step of my child's education.				
43	After participating in APTT, I have more confidence that I can make a difference in the academic performance of my child.				
44	I would recommend that schools implement APTT as their primary parent involvement program.				

APPENDIX C

TEACHER, PARENT AND STUDNT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Appendix C)

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me what or who inspired you to become a teacher.
2. Does APTT affect parents' involvement in their child's education?
3. Describe your relationship with the parents in your classroom?
4. What are the differences between APTT and the traditional model of parent involvement?
5. What are your impressions about setting academic goals with parents for students?
6. Tell me about your experience of sharing student academic reports with parents.
7. Coaching parents on key academic skills is central to APTT, what has been your experience with coaching parents?
8. Tell me about academic student performance related to participation in APTT.
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experience with this project?

Parent Interview Questions

1. Tell me about you and your family.
2. What are your dreams and aspirations for your children?
3. How do you feel about being invited by your child's teacher to participate in the Academic Parent-Teacher Team Program?
4. What experiences are you having as a member of the Academic Parent-Teacher Team in your child's classroom?
5. What kind of information do you receive when you attend APTT meetings?
6. Is participation on APTT different from the school experiences you had in the past?
7. Tell me about setting academic goals for your child.
8. Has participation in APTT made any difference in your child's academic performance?
9. Do you have a role in the academic performance of your child?
10. Is there any value in having APTT in your school?

Student Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your classroom.
2. What do you want to be when you get older?
3. Is there anyone at home who helps you with schoolwork?
4. What do you do at home when you are with your parents?
5. Tell me how you are doing in school.
6. What do your parents do to find out how to help you with schoolwork?

7. Do your parents and your teacher talk to each other? What about?
8. Now you can tell me anything you want me to know.

APPENDIX D

ADULT CONSENT FORM

(Appendix D)

Adult Consent Form

Program: Academic Parent-Teacher Teams

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Ray Buss, Associate Professor at Arizona State University and Co-investigator Maria Paredes, doctoral student, have invited your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of this action research study is to improve student learning by increasing the quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication to coach parents in the skills students need to practice at home.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study that is exploring the effect of increased parent-teacher communication in student achievement.

This action research study seeks to advance parent-teacher relationships in working-class, minority, inner-city schools by intensifying the quality and quantity of interaction between parents and teachers. This study uses a unique program called Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT), which is designed to redefine the way parents, teachers, and schools share information and responsibility regarding student learning. The parents and teachers of a classroom involved in APTT, agree to participate in three whole-classroom academic workshops, and an individual parent-teacher conference. APTT increases the parent-teacher interaction time from 40 minutes a year (as customary) to over four hours a year with a focus on sharing student academic progress, setting specific academic goals, by modeling and practicing skills that need to be reproduced at home to aide the child's learning. The APTT project is district originated and is facilitated by teachers, the school Title I facilitator, the school parent liaison, and the district Director of Community Education.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS

The possible/main benefits of your participation in this action research study, are increased meaningful parent involvement and improvement in the way parents and teachers communicate to advance student learning. It is anticipated that your son/daughter will grow academically.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. In order to maintain confidentiality of your records, Maria Paredes will use subject codes to protect names and identity of the participants. All records will be stored in a locked file cabinet, with access being allowed to only the researchers involved in the study. Any audio or videotapes from the study will be destroyed after the data is collected and analyzed at the end of the study.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with your school or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the action research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by:

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Ray Buss
4701 W. Thunderbird
Glendale, AZ 85306-4908
Office: 602-543-6343

Co-Investigator
Maria C. Paredes
4701 W. Thunderbird
Glendale, AZ 85306-4908
Cell: (602) 980-1337

Co-Investigator
Dr. Ronald Zambo
4701 W. Thunderbird
Glendale, AZ 85306-4908
Office: (602) 543-4603

Co-Investigator

Dr. Eric Margolis
1050 S. Forest Mall
Tempe, AZ 85287
Office: (480) 965-0131

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Research Compliance Office, at 480-965-6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you. Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study. It is possible this study will be published. Your name will not be disclosed.

Subject's Signature Printed Name Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E
PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

(Appendix E)

Parental Permission Letter

April 7, 2010

Dear Parents,

I, Maria Paredes, am currently pursuing my doctoral degree at the College of Teacher Education and Leadership at Arizona State University under the leadership of Dr. Ray Buss. I am conducting a research study to understand how to improve academic parent involvement in order to maximize student learning and achievement. A new parent involvement program called Academic Parent-Teacher Teams will be implemented this year in several classrooms across the Creighton Elementary School District. Your child is in one of the classrooms where the teacher has willingly become involved with the program. During the months of November and December 2010, several children will be asked to participate in a 20-minute interview that will be conducted at the school. I will be asking your child ten questions related to their experience with school, and their experience with receiving academic help from you, as their parents. I will also be using their DIBELS test data to track academic improvement as the year progresses.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose to deny permission, or if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, it will not affect his/her grade or how he/she are treated. The results of the study may be published but your child's name will not be used.

There are no risks to your child associated with participation in this study. The information your child gives me during the interview will help me have a deeper understanding of how children feel when their parents provide them help and support with schoolwork. In turn, this information will assist our district in improving the type of parent involvement programs that we provide to our parents, and it will shed light on how communication and interaction between parents and teachers can improve student learning.

If you are comfortable with your child participating in this study, please sign in the line provided below. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me, Maria Paredes at 602-381-6132 or email me at mparedes@creightonschools.org.

Respectfully,

Maria C. Paredes
Community Education Director
Creighton Elementary School District

-----Please sign and return the bottom portion -----

I give consent for my child's participation in this study.

Parent's Name: _____ Phone: _____

Child's Name: _____ Homeroom Teacher: _____

APPENDIX F
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

(Appendix F)



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Ray Buss
FAB

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 08/09/2010

Committee Action: Amendment to Approved Protocol

Approval Date: 08/09/2010

Review Type: Expedited F12

IRB Protocol #: 1008005228

Study Title: Academic Parent-Teacher Teams: A New Model of Parent Involvement on Student Achievement

Expiration Date: 06/21/2011

The amendment to the above-referenced protocol has been APPROVED following Expedited Review by the Institutional Review Board. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval of ongoing research before the expiration noted above. Please allow sufficient time for reapproval. Research activity of any sort may not continue beyond the expiration date without committee approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol on the expiration date. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study termination.

This approval by the Soc Beh IRB does not replace or supersede any departmental or oversight committee review that may be required by institutional policy.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

Arizona State University
Office of Research Integrity and
Assurance
IRB
P.O. Box 871103
Tempe, AZ 85287-1103
Phone: 480-965-6788
Fax: (480) 965-7772



For Office Use Only
Date Recd



Modification Form Institutional Review Board (IRB)

INVESTIGATOR INFORMATION		
PROTOCOL TITLE: Academic Parent Teacher Teams	1006005226	A001
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ray Buss	DEPARTMENT/ CENTER: Teachers College	
CAMPUS ADDRESS: FAB S253	PHONE: 3-6343 EMAIL: ray.buss@asu.edu	
CO-INVESTIGATORS: Maria Paredes		
FUNDING STATUS: If project is funded or funding is being sought, provide list of all sponsors and grant numbers: Not Appl.		
TYPE OF MODIFICATION (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)		
Please attach any revised documents (forms, scripts, etc). Attach a brief summary of the proposed changes as well as a justification.		
<input type="checkbox"/>	New Procedures	Attach a description of the new procedures and a revised consent form.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Study Title Change	What is the new title?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in Study Personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> Add (include the name, role, and contact information. Include copies of training certificates: http://researchintegrity.asu.edu/training/humans <input type="checkbox"/> Delete
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change of Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Add (include the name and location. If this changes the enrollment, that should be noted below.) <input type="checkbox"/> Modify <input type="checkbox"/> Delete
<input type="checkbox"/>	Change in Enrollment	Attach a narrative justifying the change. If this will affect the consent, send a revised consent form as well.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consent Change	Attach a copy and describe the change(s).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Advertisement	Attach copies of the advertisement or announcement.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Instruments (surveys, questionnaires, interviews, etc)	Attach copies of the proposed instruments and describe any changes from the approved protocol. If you are adding or deleting any instruments or items to an instrument, describe what the changes are and submit the revised materials. We changed instruments because the DIBELS is no longer being used by the state. The new instrument is the iSTEP. It measures the same variables as the DIBELS did, including Reading fluency, word recognition, and letter naming. Field notes will be added as another data collection instrument.
<input type="checkbox"/>	ASU IRB Approved	Describe the changes. If this affects the consent process, submit a revised consent form.
SIGNATURE		
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: _____	Name (first, middle, last): Ray R. Buss - No Amal affected -	
Date: 8/9/09		

Revision 05/09